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SERMONS

Preach'd on

Several Occasions.

BY

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SERMONS

Sin the most formidable Evil.

SERMON I.

Geneſis xxxix. 9.

How can I do this great Wickedneſs, and ſin againſt God?

THE Text is the Record of *Joſeph*'s Innocence and Victory, conſecrated in Scripture for the Honour and Imitation of that excellent Saint in ſucceeding Ages. He had been try'd by ſharp Afflictions, the conſpiring Envy of his Brethren, and the cruel Effects of it, Baniſhment and Servitude, *and poſſeſt his Soul in Patience*: here he was encounter'd by a more dangerous Temptation in another

kind, and preserv'd his Integrity. Adversity excites the Spirit to serious Recollection, arms it with Resolution to endure the Assaults, and stop the entrance of what is afflicting to Nature: Pleasure by gentle Insinuations relaxes the Mind to a loose Security, softens and melts the Heart, and makes it easily receptive of corrupt Impressions.

Now to represent the Grace of God, that preserved *Joseph*, in its Radiance and Efficacy, we must consider the several Circumstances that increased the Difficulty of the double Victory, over the Tempter, and himself.

1. The Tempter, *his Mistress*, who had devested the native Modesty of the blushing Sex, and by her Caresses and Blandishments sought to draw him to compliance with her Desires. Her superiour Quality might seem to make her Request

Requeſt have the force of a Command over him.

2. The Sollicitation, *Lie with me.* There are no Sins to which there is a ſtronger Inclination in our corrupted Nature, than to Acts of Senſuality. The Temptation was heighten'd by the lure of Profit and Advancement, that he might obtain by her Favour, and Intereſt in her Husband, who was an eminent Officer in the Egyptian Court: and the Denial would be extreamly provoking, both in reſpect it ſeem'd to be a Contempt injurious to her Dignity, and was a Diſappointment of her ardent Expectation. Hatred and Revenge upon Refuſal, are equal to the Luſt of *an Imperious Whoriſh Woman.* We read the Effects of it, in this Chapter: for upon his rejecting her Deſires, inflam'd with Rage, and to purge her ſelf, ſhe turn'd his Accuſer, wounded his Reputation, depriv'd him of his

Regeramus ipſæ crimen, atq; ultro impiam Venerem arguamus: ſcelere velandum eſt ſcelus. *Senec. Hippolitus.*

Liberty, and expos'd his Life to extream Peril. *Joseph* chose rather to lie in the Dust, than to rise by Sin.

3. The Opportunity was ready, and the Object present: 'tis said, *there was none of the Men of the House within.* She had the advantage of Secrecy to fasten the Temptation upon him. When a Sin may be easily committed, and easily conceal'd, the Restraints of Fear and Shame are taken off, and every Breath of a Temptation is strong enough to overthrow the carnally-minded. The purest and noblest Chastity is from a Principle of Duty within, not constrain'd by the apprehension of Discovery and Severity.

4. The Continuance of the Temptation: *She spake to him day by day.* Her Complexion was Lust and Impudence, and his repeated Denials were ineffectual to quench her incensed Desires, the black Fire that darkned her Mind. *She caught him*

him by the Garment, saying, Lie with me: she was ready to prostitute her self, and ravish him.

5. The Person tempted, *Joseph*, in the flower of his Age, the season of Sensuality, when innumerable, by the Force and Swinge of their vicious Appetites, are impell'd to break the holy Law of God.

6. His Repulse of the Temptation was strong and peremptory: *How can I do this great Wickedness?* He felt no Sympathy, no sensual Tenderness, but expresst an Impossibility of consenting to her guilty Desire. We have in *Joseph* exemplified that Property of the Regenerate, *He that is born of God, cannot sin*: by a sacred potent Instinct in his Breast, he is preserved not only from the consummate Acts, but recoils from the first Offers to it. 1 Joh. 3. 9.

7. The Reasons are specified of his rejecting her polluting Motion. *Behold, my Master knows not what is with*

me in the Houſe, and he hath committed all that he hath to my Hands: there is none greater in his Houſe than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, becauſe thou art his Wife: How then can I do this great Wickedneſs, and ſin againſt God? 'Twas a complicated Crime of Injuſtice and Uncleanneſs; a moſt injurious Violation of the ſtrongeſt Ties of Duty and Gratitude to his Maſter, and of the ſacred Marriage-Covenant to her Husband, and the foulest Blot to their Perſons: Therefore *how can I commit a Sin* ſo contrary to natural Conſcience, and ſupernatural Grace, and provoke God? Thus I have briefly conſidered the Narrative of *Joſeph*'s Temptation; and that Divine Grace preſerved him untouched from that contagious Fire, may be reſembled to the miraculous preſerving the three *Hebrew* Martyrs unſinged, in the midſt of the flaming Furnace. The Patience of

Job,

Job, and the Chaſtity of *Joſeph*, are tranſmitted by the Secretaries of the Holy Ghoſt in Scripture, to be in perpetual Remembrance and Admiration.

From this ſingular Inſtance of *Joſeph*, who was neither ſeduced by the Allurements of his Miſtreſs, nor terrified by the Rage of her deſpis'd Affection, to ſin againſt God, I ſhall obſerve two general Points.

I. *That Temptations to Sin, how alluring ſoever, or terrifying, ought to be rejected with Abhorrence.*

II. *That the Fear of God is a ſure Defence and Guard againſt the ſtrongeſt Temptation.*

I will explain and prove the firſt, and only ſpeak a little of the ſecond in a Branch of the Application.

I. *That Temptations to Sin, how alluring soever, or terifying, are to be rejected with Abhorrence.*

There will be convincing Proof of this, by considering two Things.

1. That Sin in its Nature, prescinding from the Train of woful Effects, is the greatest Evil.
2. That, relatively to us, it is the most pernicious destructive Evil.

1. That Sin considered in it self is the greatest Evil. This will be evident by considering the general Nature of it, as directly opposite to God the supream Good. The Definition of Sin expresses its essential Evil; *'tis the Transgression of the Divine Law*, and consequently opposes the Rights of God's Throne, and obscures the Glory of his Attributes that are exercis'd in the Moral

Moral Government of the World. God, as Creator, *is our King, our Lawgiver and Judg.* From his Propriety in us arises his just Title to Soveraign Power over us: *Know ye* Psal. 100. *that the Lord he is God; 'tis he that made us, not we our selves; we are his People, and the Sheep of his Pasture.* The Creatures of a lower Order are uncapable of distinguishing between Moral Good and Evil, and are determin'd by the weight of Nature to what is meerly sensible, and therefore are uncapable of a Law to regulate their Choice. But Man, who is endowed with the Powers of Understanding and Election, to conceive and choose what is Good, and reject what is Evil, is govern'd by a Law, the declared Will of his Maker: accordingly a Law, the Rule of his Obedience, was written in his Heart.

Now Sin, the Transgression of this Law, contains many great Evils.

1. Sin

1. Sin is a Rebellion against the Soveraign Majesty of God, that gives the Life of Authority to the Law. Therefore Divine Precepts are enforced with the most proper and binding Motive to Obedience, *I am the Lord.* He that with purpose and pleasure commits Sin, implicitely renounces his Dependance upon God, as his Maker and Governour, over-rules the Law, and arrogates an irresponsible Licence to do his own Will. This is expresst by those Atheistical Designers, who
Psal. 12. 4. said, *With our Tongue we will prevail, our Lips are our own: who is Lord over us?* The Language of Actions, that is more natural and convincing than of Words, declares that sinful Men despise the Commands of God, as if they were not his Creatures and Subjects. What a Dishonour, what a Displeasure is it to the God of Glory, that proud Dust should fly in his Face, and controul his Authority?

rity? *He has ten thousand times ten thousand Angels that are high in Dignity, and excel in Strength, waiting in a Posture of Reverence and Observance about his Throne, ready to do his Will*: How provoking is it for a despicable Worm to contravene his Law, and lift his Hand against him? It will be no Excuse to plead the Commands of Men for Sin: for as much as God is more glorious than Men, so much more are his Commands to be respected and obeyed than Mens. When there is an evident Opposition between the Laws of Men and of God, we must disobey our Superiours, tho we displease them, and obey our Supream Ruler. He that does what is forbidden, or neglects to do what is commanded by the Divine Law, to please Men, tho invested with the highest Sovereignty on Earth, is guilty of double Wickedness; of Impiety, in deposing God; and Idola-

Dan. 7. 10. Psal. 103. 20.

Idolatry, in deifying Men.

It is an extream Aggravation of this Evil, in that Sin as it is a disclaiming our Homage to God, so 'tis in true account a yielding Subjection to the Devil. For Sin is in the strictest Propriety *his Work*. The Original Rebellion in Paradise was by his Temptation, and all the actual and habitual Sins of Men since the Fall, are by his efficacious Influence.

2 Cor. 4. 4. *He darkens the Carnal Mind*, and sways the polluted Will; he excites and inflames the vicious Affections,

Ephes. 2. 2. and imperiously *rules in the Children of Disobedience*. He is therefore stiled *the Prince and God of this World*. And what more contumelious Indignity can there be, than the preferring to the glorious Creator of Heaven and Earth, a damned Spirit, the most cursed part of the Creation? It is most reasonable, that the Baseness of the Competitor, should be a Foil to reinforce the

Lustre

Luſtre of God's Authority: yet Men reject God, and comply with the Tempter. O prodigious Perverſneſs!

2. Sin vilifies the ruling Wiſdom of God, that preſcrib'd the Law to Men. Altho the Dominion of God over us be Supreme and Abſolute, yet 'tis exercis'd according *to the Counſel of his Will*, by the beſt Means, for the beſt Ends; he is accordingly ſtiled by the Apoſtle, *The eternal King, and only wiſe God.* 'Tis the glorious Prerogative of his Soveraignty and Deity, that he can do no Wrong: for he neceſſarily acts according to the Excellencies of his Nature. Particularly, his Wiſdom is ſo relucent in his Laws, that the ſerious Contemplation of it, will raviſh the ſincere Minds of Men into a Compliance with them. They are framed with exact Congruity to the Nature of God, and his Relation to us, and to the Fa- 1 Tim. 1.

culties

culties of Man before he was corrupted. From hence the Divine Law being the Transcript not only of God's Will, but his Wisdom, binds the Understanding and Will, our leading Faculties, to esteem and approve, to consent and choose all his Precepts as best. Now Sin vilifies the Infinite Understanding of God with respect both to the Precepts of the Law, the Rule of our Duty, and the Sanction annex'd to confirm its Obligation. It does constructively tax the Precepts as unequal, too rigid and severe a Confinement to our Wills and Actions. Thus the impious Rebels complain, *The Ways of the Lord are not equal*, as injurious to their Liberty, and not worthy of Observance. What St. *James* saith, to correct the uncharitable, censorious Humour of some in his time, *He that speaks Evil of his Brother, and judges his Brother, speaks Evil of the Law, and judges*

James 4. 11.

judges the Law, as an imperfect and rash Rule, is applicable to Sinners in any other kind. As an unskilful Hand by straining too high, breaks the Strings of an Instrument, and spoils the Musick; so the Strictness and the Severity of the Precepts, breaks the harmonious Agreement between the Wills of Men and the Law, and casts an Imputation of Imprudence upon the Law-giver. This is the implicit Blasphemy in Sin.

Besides, the Law has Rewards and Punishments, to secure our Respects and Obedience to it. The wise God knows the Frame of the reasonable Creature, what are the inward Springs of our Actions; and has accordingly propounded such Motives to our Hope and Fear, the most active Passions, as may engage us to perform our Duty. He promises his *Favour that is better than Life*, to the Obedient, and threatens

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his Wrath, that is worse than Death, to the Rebellious. Now Sin makes it evident, that these Motives are not effectual in the Minds of Men: And this reflects upon the Wisdom of the Law-giver, as if defective in not binding his Subjects firmly to their Duty; for if the Advantage or Pleasure that may be gain'd by Sin, be greater than the Reward that is promised to Obedience, and the Punishment that is threatned against the Transgression, the Law is unable to restrain from Sin, and the Ends of Government are not obtained. Thus Sinners in venturing upon forbidden things, reproach the Understanding of the Divine Law-giver.

3. Sin is a Contrariety to the unspotted Holiness of God. Of all the glorious and benign Constellations of the Divine Attributes that shine in the Law of God, his Holiness has the brightest Lustre.

God

God is holy in all his Works, but the moſt venerable and precious Monument of his Holineſs is the Law. For the Holineſs of God conſiſts in the Correſpondence of his Will and Actions with his moral Perfections, Wiſdom, Goodneſs and Juſtice; and the Law is the perfect Copy of his Nature and Will. The Pſalmiſt who had a purged Eye, ſaw and admir'd its Purity and Perfection. *The Commandment of the Lord is pure, inlightning the Eyes.* Pſal. 19. *The Word is very near, therefore thy Servant loves it.* Pſal. 119. 140. 'Tis the perſpicuous Rule of our Duty without Blemiſh or Imperfection: *The Commandment is holy, juſt and good.* It injoins nothing but what is abſolutely Good, without the leaſt Tincture of Evil. The Sum of it is ſet down by the Apoſtle, to *live ſoberly*, that is, to abſtain from any thing that may ſtain the Execellence of an underſtanding Creature: To *live*

righteously, which respects the State and Situation wherein God has disposed Men for his Glory: It comprehends all the respective Duties to others, to whom we are united by the Bands of Nature, or of Civil Society, or of Spiritual Communion: *And to live godly*, which includes all the internal and outward Duties we owe to God, who is the Soveraign of our Spirits, whose Will must be the Rule, and his Glory the End of our Actions. In short, The Law is so form'd, that prescinding from the Authority of the Law-giver, its Holiness and Goodness lays an eternal Obligation on us to obey it. Now Sin is not only by Interpretation, a Reproach to the Wisdom and other Perfections of God, but directly and formally a Contrariety to his Infinite Sanctity and Purity; for it consists in a not doing what the Law commands, or doing what it forbids.

'Tis

'Tis therefore said, *That the Carnal Mind is Enmity against God*: An active, immediate and irreconcilable Contrariety to his holy Nature and Will: From hence there is a reciprocal Hatred between God and Sinners: *God is of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity*, without an infinite Displicence, the Effects of which will fall upon Sinners; and tho 'tis an Impiety hardly conceivable, yet the Scripture tells us, that *they are Haters of God*. 'Tis true, God by the transcendent Excellence of his Nature is uncapable of suffering any Evil, and there are few in the present State arrived to such Malice, as to declare open Enmity and War against God. In the Damned this Hatred is explicit and direct, the Fever is heightned to a Frenzy, the blessed God is the Object of their Curses and Eternal Aversation: If their Rage could extend to him, and their Power were equal to their

Rom. 11.

Rom. 1.

Desires, they would dethrone the most High. And the Seeds of this are in the Breasts of Sinners here. As the fearful Expectation of irresistible and fiery Vengeance increases, their Aversation increases. They endeavour to raze out the Inscription of God in their Souls, and to extinguish the Thoughts and Sense of their Inspector and Judg. They wish he were not All-seeing and Almighty, but Blind and Impotent, uncapable to vindicate the Honour of his despised Deity. *The Fool hath said in his Heart, there is no God.* The Heart is the Fountain of Desires, and Actions interpret the Thoughts and Affections, from whence the Inference is direct and conclusive, that habitual Sinners, *who live without God in the World*, have secret Desires; there was no Soveraign Being, to observe and require an Account of all their Actions. The radical Cause of this Hatred

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is from the Oppoſition of the ſinful polluted Wills of Men, to the Holineſs of God; for that Attribute excites his Juſtice, and Power, and Wrath, to puniſh Sinners. Therefore the Apoſtle ſaith, *They are Enemies to God in their Minds through wicked Works.* The naked repreſenting of this Impiety, that a reaſonable Creature ſhould hate the bleſſed Creator for his moſt Divine Perfections, cannot but ſtrike with Horror. O the Sinfulneſs of Sin!

4. Sin is the Contempt and Abuſe of his excellent Goodneſs. This Argument is as vaſt as God's innumerable Mercies, whereby he allures and obliges us to Obedience: I ſhall reſtrain my Diſcourſe of it, to three things wherein the Divine Goodneſs is very conſpicuous, and moſt ungratefully deſpiſed by Sinners.

1*ſt.* His creating Goodneſs. 'Tis clear, without the leaſt ſhadow of

Doubt, that nothing can give the first Being to it self; for this were to be before it was, which is a direct Contradiction: and 'tis evident that God is the sole Author of our Beings. Our Parents afforded the gross matter of our compounded Nature, but the Variety and Union, the Beauty and Usefulness of the several Parts, which is so wonderful, that the Body is composed of as many Miracles as Members, was the Design of his Wisdom, and the Work of his Hands. The lively Idea and perfect Exemplar of that regular Fabrick, was modell'd in the Divine Mind. This affected the Psalmist with Admiration: *I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy Works, and that my Soul knows right-well. Thine Eyes did see my Substance, yet being imperfect, and in thy Book all my Members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none*

Psal. 139. 14, 15, 16.

of

of them. And *Job* observes, *Thy Hands have made me and fashioned me round about.* Job 10. 8. The Soul, or principal Part, is of a Celestial Original, inspired from *the Father of Spirits.* The Faculties of Understanding and Election, are the indelible Characters of our Dignity above the Brutes, and make us capable to please, and glorify, and enjoy him. This first and fundamental Benefit, upon which all other Favours and Benefits are the Superstructure, was the Effect from an eternal Cause, his most free Decree, that ordained our Birth in the spaces of Time. The Fountain was his pure Goodness; there was no Necessity determining his Will, he did not want external declarative Glory, being infinitely happy in himself, and there could be no superiour Power to constrain him. And that which renders our Maker's Goodness more free and obliging, is the Considera-

tion he might have created Millions of Men, and left us in our native Nothing, and, as I may so speak, lost and buried in perpetual Darkness. Now, what was God's end in making us? Certainly it was becoming his Infinite Unerstanding, that is, to communicate of his own Divine Fulness, and to be actively glorified by intelligent Creatures. Accordingly 'tis the solemn Acknowledgment of the Representative Church. *Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive Glory, and Honour,* Rev. 4. 11. *and Power: For thou hast created all Things, and for thy Pleasure they were created.* Who is so void of rational Sentiments, as not to acknowledg 'tis our indispensable Duty, *Our reasonable Service, to offer up our selves an intire living Sacrifice to his Glory?* What is more natural, according to the Laws of uncorrupt Nature, (I might say, and of corrupt Nature, for the Heathens practised it) than

than that Love ſhould correſpond with Love; as the one deſcends in Benefits, the other ſhould aſcend in Thankfulneſs. As a poliſh'd Looking-glaſs of Steel, ſtrongly reverberates the Beams of the Sun ſhining upon it, without loſing a ſpark of Light, thus the underſtanding Soul ſhould reflect the Affection of Love upon our bleſſed Maker, in Reverence, and Praiſe, and Thankfulneſs. Now Sin breaks all thoſe ſacred Bands of Grace and Gratitude, that engage us to love and obey God. He is the juſt Lord of all our Faculties Intellectual and Senſitive, and the Sinner employs them as Weapons of Unrighteouſneſs againſt him. He preſerves us by his powerful gracious Providence, which is a renewed Creation every Moment, and the Goodneſs he uſes to us, the Sinner abuſes againſt him. This is the moſt unworthy, ſhameful and monſtrous Ingrati-

Ingratitude. This makes forgetful and unthankful Men, more brutish than *the dull Ox, and the stupid Ass*, who serve those that feed them; nay, sinks them below the insensible part of the Creation, that invariably observes the Law and Order prescribed by the Creator. Astonishing Degeneracy! *Hear O Heavens, give Ear, O Earth! I have nourished and brought up Children, and they have rebelled against me*, was the Complaint of God himself. The considerate Review of this, will melt us into Tears of Confusion.

2*dly*. 'Twas the unvaluable Goodness of God to give his Law to Man, for his Rule, both in respect of the matter of the Law, and his end in giving it.

(1.) The matter of the Law, this, as is forecited from the Apostle, *is holy, just, and good. It contains all things that are honest, and just, and pure, and lovely, and of good Report, whatso-*

whatsoever are Vertuous and Praise-worthy. In Obedience to it the Innocence and Perfection of the reasonable Creature consists. This I do but glance upon, having been consider'd before.

(2.) The end of giving the Law. God was pleas'd upon Man's Creation, by an illustrious Revelation to shew him his Duty, to *write his Law in his Heart*, that he might not take one step out of the Circle of its Precepts, and immediately sin and perish. His gracious Design was to keep Man in his Love; that from the Obedience of the reasonable Creature, the Divine Goodness might take its rise to reward him. This unfeigned and excellent Goodness, the Sinner outragiously despises: for what greater Contempt can be expresst against a written Law, than the tearing it in pieces, and trampling it under foot? And this constructively the Sinner does

does to the Law of God, which Contempt extends to the gracious Giver of it. *Thus the Commandment that was ordain'd unto Life, by Sin was found unto Death.* Rom. 7. 10.

(3.) Sin is an extream vilifying of God's Goodneſs, in preferring Carnal Pleaſures to his Favour, and Communion with him, wherein the Life, the Felicity, the Heaven of the reaſonable Creature conſiſts. God is Infinite in all poſſible Perfections, All-ſufficient to make us compleatly and eternally happy: he diſdains to have any Competitor, and requires to be ſupream in our Eſteem and Affections: the reaſon of this is ſo evident by Divine and Natural Light, that 'tis needleſs to ſpend many words about it. 'Tis an Obſervation of St. *Auſtin* *, *That it was a Rule amongſt the Heathens, that a wiſe Man ſhould worſhip all their Deities.* The Romans were ſo inſatiable in Idolatry, that they ſent to

* Omnes Deos colendos eſſe ſapienti. Cur ergo à numero cæterorum ille rejectus eſt? nihil reſtat ut dicant, hujus Dei ſacra recipere noluerint, niſi quia ſolum ſe coli voluerit. *Aug. de Conſenſ. Evang. c.* 17.

Foreign

Foreign Countries to bring the Gods of ſeveral Nations: an unpoliſh'd Stone, a tame Serpent, that were reputed Deities, they received with great Solemnity and Reverence. But the true God had no Temple, no Worſhip in *Rome*, where there was a *Pantheon* dedicated to the Honour of all the falſe Gods. The Reaſon he gives of it is, that the true God, who alone has Divine Excellencies, and Divine Empire, will be worſhip'd alone, and ſtrictly forbids the Aſſumption of any into his Throne. To adore any beſides him is infinitely debaſing, and provoking to his dread Majeſty. Now Sin in its Nature is a Converſion from God to the Creature; and whatever the Temptation be, in yielding to it, there is ſignified, that we chooſe ſomething before his Favour. Sin is founded *in bono jucundo*, ſomething that is delectable to the Carnal Nature: 'tis

the

the universal Character of Carnal Men, *They are Lovers of Pleasure more than Lovers of God.* To some, Riches are the most alluring Object. The young Man in the Gospel, when our Saviour commanded *him to give his Estate to the Poor, and he should have Treasure in Heaven, went away sorrowful,* as if he had been offer'd to his loss. To others, the Pleasures that in strict Propriety are sensual, are most charming. Love is the Weight of the Soul that turns it, not like a dead Weight of the Scales, but with Election freely to its Object: in the carnal Ballance the present Things of the World are of conspicuous Moment, and out-weigh Spiritual and Eternal Blessings. Altho the Favour of God be eminently all that can be desir'd, under the Notion of Riches, or Honour, or Pleasure, and every Atom of our Affection is due to him; yet Carnal Men think it a

cheap

cheap Purchaſe to obtain the good Things of this World, by ſinful means, with the loſs of his Favour. This their Actions declare. Prodigious Folly! as if a few Sparks ſtruck out of a Flint, that can neither afford Light or Warmth, were more deſirable than the Sun in its Brightneſs. And how contumelious and provoking it is to God, he declares in the moſt moving Expreſſions: *Be aſtoniſhed, O ye Heavens at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very deſolate, ſaith the Lord. For my People have committed two Evils; they have forſaken me the Fountain of living Waters, and hewed them out broken Ciſterns that can hold no Water.* This immediately was charg'd upon the Jews, who ſet up Idols of Jealouſy, and ador'd them, rather than the glorious *Jehovah*: and in proportion 'tis true of all Sinners; for every vicious Affection prefers ſome vain Object, before his Love, Jer. 2. 12, 13.

and

and the Enjoyment of his glorious Presence, that is the Reward of Obedience.

5. The Sinner disparages the impartial Justice of God. In the Divine Law there is a Connexion between Sin and Punishment; the Evil of doing and the Evil of suffering. This is not a meer Arbitrary Constitution, but founded on the inseparable Desert of Sin, and the Rectitude of God's Nature, which unchangeably loves Holiness, and hates Sin. Altho the threatning does not lay a strict necessity upon the Lawgiver always to inflict the Punishment; yet God having declar'd his equal Laws as the Rule of our Duty, and of his Judgment, if they should be usually without Effect upon Offenders, the Bands of Government would be dissolv'd, and consequently the Honour of his Justice stain'd both with respect to his Nature and Office:

Office: for as an essential Attribute 'tis the Correspondence of his Will and Actions with his Moral Perfections; and as Soveraign Ruler, he is to preserve Equity and Order in his Kingdom. Now those who voluntarily break his Law, presume upon Impunity. The first rebellious Sin was committed upon this Presumption: God threatn'd, *If you eat the forbidden Fruit, you shall die: the Serpent says, Eat, and you shall not die*; and assenting to the Temptation, *Adam* fell to Disobedience. And ever since Men are fearless to sin upon the same Motive. God chargeth the wicked, *Thou thoughtest* Psal. 50. *that I was altogether such a one as thy self*; not concern'd to punish the Violation of his sacred Laws. The Sinner commits the Divine Attributes to fight against one another, presuming that Mercy will disarm Justice, and stop its terrible Effects upon impenitent obstinate Sinners:

From hence they become bold and harden'd in the continuance of their Sins. *There is a Root that beareth Gall and Wormwood*: and when the Curſe of the Law is declar'd and denounc'd againſt Sin, *the Wicked bleſſeth himſelf in his Heart, ſaying, I ſhall have Peace, tho I walk in the Imagination of my Heart, to add Drunkenneſs to Thirſt.* This caſts ſuch a foul Blemiſh upon the Juſtice of God, that he threatens the ſevereſt Vengeance for it. *The Lord will not ſpare him, but the Anger of the Lord and his Jealouſy ſhall ſmoke againſt that Man, and all the Curſes written in this Book ſhall be upon him, and the Lord ſhall blot out his Name from under Heaven. Conſider this ye that forget God, leſt I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.*

Deut. 29. 17, 19, 20.

Pſal. 50.

6. The Sinner implicitly denies God's Omniſcience. There is ſuch a Turpitude adhering to Sin, that it cannot endure the Light of the Sun,

or

or the Light of Conſcience, but ſeeks to be conceal'd under a Mask of Vertue, or a Vail of Darkneſs. There are very few on this ſide Hell, ſo transform'd into the likeneſs of the Devil, as to be impenetrable by Shame. What is ſaid of the Adulterer and Thief, Sinners of greater Guilt, and deeper Dye, is true in proportion of every Sinner: *If a Mans ſees them, they are in the Terrors of the ſhadow of Death.* Job. Now from whence is it that many, who if they were ſurpriz'd in the actings of their Sins by a Child or a Stranger, would bluſh and tremble, yet altho the holy God ſees all their Sins in order to judg them, and will judg in order to puniſh them, are ſecure without any fearful or ſhameful Apprehenſions of his Preſence? Did they ſtedfaſtly believe that their foul Villanies were open to his piercing, pure and ſevere Eye, they muſt be ſtruck with Terrors,

and cover'd with Confusion. *Will he force the Queen before my Face?* was the Speech of the King inflam'd with Wrath, and the Prologue of Death against the fallen Favourite. Would Men dare to affront God's Authority, and outragiously break his Laws before his Face, if they duly consider'd his Omnipresence and Observance of them? it were impossible. And Infidelity is the radical Cause of their Inconsideration. It was a false Imputation against *Job*, but justly applied to the Wicked, *Thou sayest, How does God know? can he judg through the dark Cloud? Thick Clouds are a Covering to him, that he sees not.* And such are introduced by the Psalmist declaring their inward Sentiments: *The Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of* Jacob *regard it.*

Job 22. 13, 14.

Lastly; The Sinner slights the Power of God. This Attribute renders God a dreadful Judg. He has

has a Right to punish, and Power to revenge every Transgression of his Law. His Judicial Power is supreme, his Executive is irresistible. He can with one Stroke dispatch the Body to the Grave, and the Soul to Hell, and make Men as miserable as they are sinful. Yet Sinners as boldly provoke him, as if there were no danger. We read of the infatuated *Syrians*, that they thought that God, the Protector of *Israel*, had only *Power on the Hills*, and not *in the Vallies*, and renewed the War to their Destruction. Thus Sinners enter into the Lists with God, and range an Army of Lusts against the Armies of Heaven, and blindly bold, run upon their own Destruction. They neither believe his All-seeing Eye, nor All-mighty Hand. They change the Glory of the living God into a dead Idol, that has Eyes and sees not, and Hands and handles not; and accordingly

his Threatnings make no Impreſſion upon them.

Thus I have preſented a true View of the Evil of Sin conſider'd in it ſelf: but as *Job* ſaith of God, *How little a Portion of him is known?* may be ſaid of the Evil of Sin, How little of it is known? For in proportion as our Apprehenſions are defective and below the Greatneſs of God, ſo are they of the Evil of Sin, that contradicts his Soveraign, Will and diſhonours his excellent Perfections.

SER-

SERMON II.

Geneſis xxxix. 9.

How can I do this great Wickedneſs, and ſin againſt God?

2. I ſhall proceed to conſider the Evil of Sin relatively to us, and prove it to be moſt pernicious and deſtructive. If we compare it with Temporal Evils, it preponderates all that Men are liable to in the preſent World. Diſeaſes in our Bodies, Diſaſters in our Eſtates, Diſgrace in our Reputation, are in juſt Eſteem far leſs Evil than the Evil of Sin: for that corrupts and deſtroys our more excellent and immortal Part. The *vile Body* is of no account in compariſon of *the precious Soul*. Therefore the Apoſtle enforces his Exhortation, *Dearly*

beloved Brethren, abstain from fleshly Lusts, that war against the Soul. The Issue of this War is infinitely more woful, than of the most cruel against our Bodies and Goods, our Liberties and Lives: for our Estates and Freedom, if lost, may be recover'd; if the present Life be lost for the Cause of God, it shall be restor'd in greater Lustre and Perfection; but if the Soul be lost, 'tis lost for ever.

All Temporal Evils are consistent with the Love of God: *Job* on the Dunghil, roughcast with Ulcers, was most precious in God's sight: *Lazarus* in the lowest Poverty, and wasted with loathsome Sores, was dear to his Affections; a Guard of Angels was sent to convoy his departing Soul to the Divine Presence. *But Sin separates between God and us*, who is the Fountain of Felicity, and the Center of Rest to the Soul.

Other

Other Evils God, who is our wiſe and compaſſionate Father and Phyſician, makes uſe of, as Medicinal Preparations for the Cure of Sin: and certainly the Diſeaſe which would be the Death of the Soul, is worſe than the Remedy, tho never ſo bitter and afflicting to Senſe.

Sin is an Evil of that Malignity, that the leaſt degree of it is fatal. If it be conceiv'd in the Soul, tho not actually finiſh'd, 'tis deadly. One Sin corrupted in an inſtant Angelical Excellencies, and turn'd the glorious Spirits of Heaven into Devils. 'Tis Poiſon ſo ſtrong, that the firſt Taſte of it ſhed a deadly Taint and Malignity into the Veins of all Mankind.

Sin is ſuch an exceeding Evil, that 'tis the ſevereſt Puniſhment Divine Juſtice inflicts on Sinners on this ſide Hell. The giving *Men over to the Power of their Luſts*, is the moſt fearful Judgment, not only with reſpect

respect to the Cause, God's unrelenting and unquenchable Anger, and the Issue, everlasting Destruction, but in the quality of the Judgment. Nay, did Sin appear as odious in our Eyes as it does in God's, we should account it the worst part of Hell it self, the Pollutions of the Damned to be an Evil exceeding the Torments superadded to them.

Sin is pregnant with all kinds of Evils, the Seeds of it are big with Judgments. The Evils that are obvious to Sense, or that are Spiritual and Inward, Temporal and Eternal Evils, all proceed from Sin, often as the Natural Cause, and always as the Meritorious. And many times the same Punishment is produc'd by the Efficiency of Sin, as well as inflicted for its Guilt. Thus Uncleanness, without the miraculous Waters of Jealousy, rots the Body, and the Pleasure of Sin

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is revenged by a loathsom consuming Disease, the natural Consequence of it. Thus Intemperance and Luxury shorten the Lives of Men, and accelerate Damnation. Fierce Desires, and wild Rage are Fewel for the everlasting Fire in Hell. The same Evils considered Physically, are from the Efficiency of Sin; consider'd legally, are from the Guilt of Sin, and the Justice of God.

This being a Point of great Usefulness, that I may be more instructive, I will consider the Evils that are consequential to Sin, under these two Heads.

First, Such as proceed immediately from it by Emanation.

Secondly; Those Evils, and all other as the Effects of God's Justice and Sentence.

First,

First, The Evils that proceed immediately by Emanation from it: and tho some of them are not resented with feeling Apprehensions by Sinners, yet they are of a fearful Nature. Sin has deprived Man of the Purity, Nobility, and Peace of his innocent State.

1. It has stain'd and tainted him with an universal, intimate and permanent Pollution. Man in his first Creation was holy and righteous: a Beam of Beauty derived from Heaven was shed upon his Soul, in comparison of which, sensitive Beauty is but as the Clearness of Glass, to the Lustre of a Diamond. His Understanding *was Light in the Lord*, his Will and Affections were regular and pure, the Divine Image was impress upon all his Faculties, that attracted the Love and Complaceney of God himself. Sin has blotted out all his amiable Excellencies, and super-

induc'd

induc'd the most foul Deformity, the Original of which was fetch'd from Hell. Sinners are the natural Children of Satan, of a near Resemblance to him. The Scripture borrows Comparisons to represent the defiling Quality of Sin, from Pollutions that are most loathsom to our Senses: *from pestilential Ulcers, putrifying Sores, filthy Vomit, and defiling Mire.* This Pollution is universal through the whole Man, *Spirit, Soul and Body.* It darkens the Mind, our supream Faculty, with a Cloud of Corruption; it depraves the Will, and vitiates the Affections. 'Tis a Pollution so deep and permanent, that the Deluge that swept away a World of Sinners, did not wash away their Sins: and the Fire at the last Day, that shall devour the Dross of the visible World, and renew the Heavens and the Earth, shall not purge away the Sins of the guilty Inhabitants.

bitants. This Pollution hath so defil'd and disfigur'd Man, who was a fair and lovely Type, wherein the Skill and Perfections of the Creator was conspicuous, *that it repented God that he made Man.* As an Artificer having form'd a surprizing Piece, either a Statue or Picture, wherein Art almost equall'd the Life and Lustre of Nature; if it be torn or broken, throws it from his sight with sorrow, impatient to see it so rudely defaced: Thus God is said *to hide his Face from Sinners*, to express his Displeasure, as unwilling to behold the Disparagement of his Master-piece, the excellent Product of his Wisdom and Power.

2. Sin has degraded Man from his native State and Dignity. Man by his Extraction and Descent was *the Son of God, a little lower than the Angels*, consecrated and crowned, as a Priest for the Service and Communion

munion with his glorious Maker, and as King over the World. *But being in Honour, he underſtood not his Dignity, his Duty and Felicity, and became like the Beaſts that periſh.* By his Rebellion againſt his Creator, he made a Forfeiture of his Dominion, and loſt the Obedience of ſenſible Creatures, and the Service of Inſenſible; which I only mention, and ſhall reſtrain my Conſideration, to ſhew how he is become like the Beaſts, as an Effect reſulting from his Sin. He is deveſted of his white Robe of Innocence, and his nobleſt Perfections, Reaſon and Religion. Senſe and Imagination, the leading Faculties in Brutes, are his Rulers: The rational governing Powers of Man, have loſt their ſuperior Sway, and the Carnal Paſſions rove without Reins to forbidden Objects. The lower Appetites are predominant, which is the moſt ignominious and cruel

cruel Servitude wherein Human Liberty can be intangled and fetter'd. His Understanding and Will, that were capable of taking a flight for the Discovery and Fruition of Celestial and Eternal Things, are debased, and limited to sensual perishing Things, and derive vilifying Qualities from them. *He is Earthly-minded*; his Aims, Contrivances, Desires are fastened to the Earth: the Divine Spark within him is cover'd under Ashes. *He is carnally minded*, always studying and making *Provisions for the Flesh*. This is a viler Debasement, than if the Counsellors of State were employed in the sordid Offices of the Kitchin or Stable. Nay, 'tis a Diminution below the Rank of Beasts, for by Nature they are uncapable of directing their Eyes and Desires towards Heaven; but Man is Brutish by his voluntary Sin. To see the Head of a rapacious Wolf, or fierce

fierce Tyger, or luſtful Horſe joined to the Body of a Man, how monſtrous would it appear? But 'tis more unnatural and ignominious, for Men, in whom Reaſon and Religion ſhould govern, to reſemble them in the Brutiſh Appetites of Luſt and Rage; for there is a nearer Affinity between the Body of a Man and of a Beaſts, that agree in the common ſenſible Nature, than between the Immortal Spirit of a Man, and the Beaſts that periſh. In ſhort, Sin has enſlaved Men to Satan an Infernal Fiend: *They are taken Captives by him at his Pleaſure*: And, which is the loweſt *Degradation*, *they are the Servants of Corruption.*

3. Sin has broke the ſweet Peace and bleſſed Concord in the Soul, the Felicity of our innocent State. Peace is the Tranquillity that reſults from Order and Unity. In Man there was a regular Harmony of all

his Faculties; the Affections were conſonant with his Will, his Will with his Underſtanding, and his Underſtanding with the Law of God. This was the inward State of his Soul in his Creation; for having a derived Being, it was natural and neceſſary, that he ſhould be appointed to his End, and receive his Rule for the obtaining it, from the Underſtanding and Will of his Maker. Now whilſt there was a Correſpondence in his Faculties, and their Operations with his Rule and End, the Will of God, and the Glory of God, the Reſult of it, as well as the Reward of it, was Spiritual Peace with God, Internal Peace with himſelf, External Peace with others. Now Sin has diſſolved this Unity, violated this ſacred Order: And from hence,

(1.) Peace with God, that conſiſted in his Favour and Friendſhip to us, and our Filial Dependance upon

upon him, which is the Spring of full and satisfying Joy, is broke. God appears a fearful Enemy against the Sinners; the penal Effects of his Wrath, I shall speak of distinctly under the second General: And that Divine Calm in the Conscience, that Peace joyn'd with the purest Pleasure, that was the Reflex of God's Favour on the Soul, is changed into anxious Apprehensions of his just Power to punish us. Guilt generates Fear, and Fear Hatred, and both cause a woful flight from God.

(2.) Internal Peace is broke by Sin. Whilst the Passions were subordinate to the Empire of Reason, and in Accord among themselves, there was a perfect Peace; but Sin has raised an intestine War in Man's Breast. *The Law of the Members rebels against the Law of the Mind*: for there is no Man so prodigiously wicked, and spoil'd of his Primi-

tive Endowments, but ſtill there remains ſome Principles of Morality in the Mind, ſo that his Conſcience diſcovers and condemns the Vices he allows and practiſes, which makes the Sinner uneaſy to himſelf, and mixes Vinegar with his Wine. Beſides, ſince the Paſſions are diſbanded, into what Confuſion is Man fallen? How various, how violent are they, and often repugnant to one another? How often do we change their Habits and Scenes in a day? Sometimes we are vainly merry, and then as vainly ſad; ſometimes deſirous, and then averſe; and with reſpect to our ſelves, ſometimes pleaſed, ſometimes vex'd, ſometimes amiable, and ſometimes odious; we are more mutable than the Planet that is the Emblem of Inconſtancy. How often do Clouds of Melancholy darken the bright Serenity of the Spirit, and caſt a dreadful Gloom over

Prima hæc eſt ultio, quod ſe judice nemo nocens abſolvit.

over it? How oft do Storms of Paſſion diſturb its Tranquillity? The Breaſt of Man, that was the Temple of Peace, is become a Den of Dragons; every exorbitant Affection tears and torments him. 'Tis true, this is alſo a penal Effect from Divine Juſtice: *There is no Peace ſaith my God to the Wicked*: With which that Saying of St. *Auſtin* is conſonant, *Juſſit Domine, & ſic eſt, omnis inordinatus affectus eſt ſibi pœna.*

(3.) Sin has broke our Agreement with one another. When there was a regular Conſent between the ſuperiour and lower Faculties in all Men, they were in Unity among themſelves, for they were perfectly alike. But the tumultuous and tyrannical Paſſions have engaged them in mortal Enmity. 'Tis the account St. *James* gives, *From whence come Wars and Fightings among you? Come they not*

hence, even of your Lusts, that war in your Members? Sin kindles and blows the Fire of Discord, in Families, Cities, Kingdoms: Sin is the Fury that brings a smoaking Firebrand from Hell, and sets the World into Combustion. Ambition, Avarice, the greedy Desires of Rule and Revenge, have made the World a Stage of not feigned, but the most bloody Tragedies. In this Men are not like, but worse than the Beasts: for the fiercest Beasts of *Africa* or *Hyrcania*, have a respect for their own Likeness: tho they devour others, yet they spare those of their own kind: but Men are so degenerate as to be most cruel against their Brethren. These are some of the Evils that proceed from Sin as their natural Cause. And from hence 'tis evident, that Sin makes Men miserable, were there no Hell of Torment to receive them in the next State.

Secondly;

Secondly; I will consider the Evils consequent to Sin, as the Penal Effects of the Sentence against Sin; of Divine Justice that decrees it, and Divine Power that inflicts it: and in these the Sinner is often an active Instrument of his own Misery.

1. The Fall of the Angels is the first and most terrible Punishment of Sin. *God spared not the Angels that sinned, but cast them down to Hell, reserved in Chains of Darkness to Judgment.* How are they fallen? from what height of Glory and Felicity into bottomless Perdition? How are they continually rack'd and tormented with the Remembrance of their lost Happiness? If a thousand of the prime Nobility of a Nation were executed in a day, by the Sentence of a righteous King, we should conclude their Crimes to be *atrocious*: innumerable Angels, dignified *with the Titles of*

Dominions and Principalities, were expell'd from Heaven, their native Seat, and the Sanctuary of Life, and are dead to all the joyful Operations of the intellectual Nature, and only alive to Everlasting Pain.

One Sin of Pride or Envy, brought this terrible Vengeance; from whence we may infer, how provoking Sin is to the holy God. We read of King *Uzziah*, *that upon his Presumption to offer Incense, he was struck with a Leprosy, and the Priests thrust him out, and himself hasted to go out of the Temple*: a Representation of the Punishment of the Angels: by Presumption they were struck with a Leprosy, and justly expelled from the Celestial Temple; and not being able to sustain the Terrors of the Divine Majesty, they fled from his Presence. 'Tis said, *God cast them down, and they left their own Habitation.*

2. Con-

2. Consider the Penal Effects of Sin with respect to Man. They are comprehended in the Sentence of Death, the first and second Death, threaten'd to deter *Adam* from transgressing the Law.

In the first Creation Man while innocent was immortal: for altho his Body was compounded of jarring Elements, that had a natural Tendency to Dissolution, yet the Soul was endowed with such Vertue, as to imbalm the Body alive, and to preserve it from the least degree of Putrefaction. But when Man by his voluntary Sin was separated from the *Fountain of Life*, the Soul lost its derivative Life from God, and the active Life infused by its Union into the Body. It cannot preserve the natural Life beyond its limited Term. A righteous Retaliation. Thus the Apostle tells us, *Sin came into the World, and Death by Sin.* Even Infants who never

never committed Sin, die, having been conceived in Sin. And Death brought in its Retinue Evils so numerous and various, that their kinds are more than words to name and distinguish them. *Man that is born of a Woman, is of few days, and full of Trouble*: at his Birth he enters into a Labyrinth of Thorns, this miserable World, and his Life is a continual turning in it: he cannot escape being sometimes prick'd and torn; and at going out of it, his Soul is rent from the Embraces of the Body. 'Tis as possible to tell the number of the Waves in a tempestuous Sea, as to recount all the tormenting Passions of the Soul, all the Diseases of the Body, which far exceed in number all the unhappy Parts wherein they are seated. What an afflicting Object would it be, to hear all the mournful Lamentations, all the piercing Complaints, all the deep Groans from the miserable

rable in this preſent State? What a proſpect of Terror, to ſee Death in its various Shapes, by Famine, by Fire, by Sword, and by waſting or painful Diſeaſes, triumphant over all Mankind? What a ſight of Woe, to have all the Graves and Charnel-houſes open'd, and ſo many loathſom Carcaſes, or heaps of dry naked Bones, the Trophies of Death, expos'd to view? Such are the afflicting and the deſtructive Effects of Sin. *For Wickedneſs burns as a Fire: it devours the Briars and Thorns.*

Beſides other Miſeries in this Life, ſometimes the Terrors of an accuſing Conſcience ſeize upon Men, which of all Evils are moſt heavy and overwhelming. *Solomon* who underſtood the Frame of Humane Nature, tells us, *The Spirit of a Man can bear his Infirmity*: that is, the Mind fortified by Principles of moral Counſel and Conſtancy, can endure

dure the Assault of external Evils: *but a wounded Spirit who can bear?* This is most insupportable when the Sting and Remorse of the Mind is from the Sense of Guilt: for then God appears an Enemy righteous and severe; and who can encounter with offended Omnipotence? Such is the sharpness of his Sword, and the weight of his Hand, that every Stroke is deadly inward. Satan the cruel Enemy of Souls, exasperates the Wound. He discovers and charges Sin upon the Conscience, with all its killing Aggravations, and conceals the Divine Mercy, the only Lenitive and healing Balm to the wounded Spirit. What Visions of Horror, what Spectacles of Fear, what Scenes of Sorrow are presented to the distracted Mind by the Prince of Darkness? And which heightens the Misery, Man is a worse Enemy to himself than Satan: he falls upon his own Sword,

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and destroys himself. Whatever he sees or hears, afflicts him; whatever he thinks, torments him. The guilty Conscience *turns the Sun into Darkness, and the Moon into Blood*: the precious Promises of the Gospel, that assure Favour and Pardon to returning and relenting Sinners, are turn'd into Arguments of Despair, by reflecting upon the abuse and provocation of Mercy, and that the Advocate in God's Bosom is become the Accuser. Doleful State! beyond the Conception of all, but those who are plung'd into it. How often do they run to the Grave for Sanctuary, and seek for Death as a Deliverance?

Yet all these Anxieties and Terrors are but the beginning of Sorrows: for the full and terrible Recompences of Sin shall follow the Eternal Judgment pronounc'd against the Wicked at the last Day. 'Tis true, the Sentence of the Law

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is past against the Sinner in this present State, and Temporal Evils are the Effects of it; but that Sentence is revokable: at Death the Sentence is ratified by the Judg upon every impenitent Sinner; 'tis decisive of his State, and involves him under Punishment for ever: But the full Execution of Judgment shall not be till the publick general Sentence pronounc'd by the everlasting Judg, before the whole World. It exceeds the compass of created Thoughts to understand fully the direful Effects of Sin in the Eternal State: *For who knows the Power of God's Wrath?* The Scripture represents the Punishment in Expressions, that may instruct the Mind, and terrify the Imagination: that may work upon the Principles of Reason and Sense, by which Men are naturally and strongly moved.

1. Sinners shall be excluded from Communion with the blessed God in

in Heaven, *in whose Presence is Fulness of Joy, and at whose Right-hand are Pleasures for evermore.* In the clear and transforming Vision of his Glory, and the intimate and indissolvable Union with him by Love, consists the Perfection and Satisfaction of the immortal Soul. The Felicity resulting from it, is so entire and eternal, as God is great and true, who has so often promis'd it to his Saints. Now Sin separates lost Souls for ever from the reviving Presence of God. Who can declare the Extent and Degrees of that Evil? for an Evil rises in proportion to the Good of which it deprives us: it must therefore follow, that Celestial Blessedness being transcendent, the Exclusion from it is proportionably evil: And as the Felicity of the Saints results both from the direct Possession of Heaven, and from comparison with the contrary State: so the Misery of

of the Damned ariſes, both from the Thoughts of loſt Happineſs, and from the laſting Pain that torments them.

But it may be replied, If this be the utmoſt Evil that is conſequent to Sin, the threatning of it is not likely to deter but few from pleaſing their corrupt Appetites: for carnal Men have ſuch groſs Apprehenſions, and vitiated Affections, that they are careleſs of Spiritual Glory and Joy. *They cannot taſte and ſee how good the Lord is*: nay, the Divine Preſence would be a Torment to them: For as Light is the moſt pleaſant Quality in the World to the ſound Eye, ſo 'tis very afflicting and painful to the Eye when corrupted by a Suffuſion of Humours.

To this a clear Anſwer may be given: In the next State where the Wicked ſhall for ever be without thoſe ſenſual Objects which here deceive

ceive and delight them, their Apprehenſions will be changed; they ſhall underſtand what a Happineſs the Fruition of the bleſſed God is, and what a Miſery to be uncapable of enjoying him, and expell'd from the Celeſtial Paradiſe. Our Saviour tells the Infidel Jews, *There ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of Teeth,* Luke 15: 28: *when ye ſhall ſee* Abraham, *and* Iſaac, *and* Jacob, *and all the Prophets in the Kingdom of God, and you your ſelves ſhut out.* How will they pine with Envy at the ſight of that Triumphant Felicity of which they ſhall never be Partakers? *Depart from me,* will be as terrible a part of the Judgment, *as Eternal Fire.*

2. God's Juſtice is not ſatisfied in depriving them of Heaven, but inflicts the moſt heavy Puniſhment upon Senſe and Conſcience in the Damned: for as the Soul and Body in their State of Union in this Life, were both guilty, the one as the

Guide, the other as the Instrument of Sin; so 'tis equal, when re-united, they should feel the Penal Effects of it. The Scripture represents both to our Capacity, *by the Worm that never dies, and the Fire that shall never be quenched*: and *by the destroying of Body and Soul in Hell-Fire*. Sinners shall then be tormented, wherein they were most delighted: they shall be invested with those Objects, that will cause the most dolorous Perceptions in their sensitive Faculties. *The Lake of Fire and Brimstone, the Blackness of Darkness*, are words of a terrible Signification, and intended to awaken Sinners to fly *from the Wrath to come*. But no words can fully reveal the terrible Ingredients of their Misery: the Punishment will be in proportion to the Glory of God's Majesty that is dishonour'd and provok'd by Sin, and extent of his Power. And as the Soul was the Principal, and the

Body

Body but an Acceſſary in the Works of Sin; ſo its capacious Faculties will be far more tormented, than the more limited Faculties of the outward Senſes. The fiery Attributes of God ſhall be tranſmitted through the Glaſs of Conſcience, and concenter'd upon damned Spirits: the Fire without them is not ſo tormenting as this Fire within them. How will the tormenting Paſſions be inflam'd? What Rancor, Reluctance and Rage againſt the Power above that ſentenc'd them to Hell? What Impatience and Indignation againſt themſelves for their wilful Sins, the juſt Cauſe of it? How will they curſe their Creation, and wiſh their utter Extinction, as the final Remedy of their Miſery? But all their ardent Wiſhes are in vain: for the Guilt of Sin will never be expiated, nor God ſo far reconcil'd as to annihilate them. As long as there is Juſtice

in Heaven, and Fire in Hell, as long as God and Eternity shall continue, they must suffer these Torments, which the Strength and Patience of an Angel cannot bear one hour. From hence we may infer, what an inconceiveable Evil there is in Sin, and how hateful it is to the most High, when God *who is Love*, who is *stiled the Father of Mercies*, has prepared and does inflict such Plagues for ever for the Transgression of his holy Laws: and such is the Equity of his Judgment, that he never punishes Offenders above their Desert.

I shall now apply this Doctrine, by reflecting the Light of it upon our Minds and Hearts.

1. This discovers how perverse and depraved the Minds and Wills of Men are, *to chuse Sin rather than Affliction*, and break the Divine Law for the obtaining Temporal Things.

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If one with an attentive Eye regards the generality of Mankind, what Dominion present and sensible Things have over them, how securely and habitually they sin in prosecution of their Carnal Aims, as if the Soul should not survive the Body, as if there were no Tribunal above to examine, no Judg to sentence and punish Sinners; if he has not Marble Bowels, it will excite his Compassion or Indignation. What Comparison is there between the good Things of this World, and of the next in Degrees or Duration? Aiery Honour, Sensual Pleasures, and Worldly Riches, are but the thin Appearances of Happiness, Shadows in Masquerade, that cannot afford solid Content to an immortal Spirit: the Blessedness of Heaven repleniſhes with everlasting Satisfaction. What Proportion is there between the *light and momentary Afflictions here*, and a vast Eternity

fill'd with Indignation and Wrath, Tribulation and Anguiſh, and deſperate Sorrow? What ſtupid Beaſt, what Monſter of a Man, would prefer a ſuperficial tranſient Delight, the Pleaſure of a ſhort Dream, before ever-ſatisfying Joys? Or to avoid a ſlight Evil, venture upon Deſtruction? Yet this is the true Caſe of Sinners: if they can obtain the World with the loſs of Heaven, they count it a valuable Purchaſe; if they can compound ſo, as to eſcape Temporal Troubles, tho involved under Guilt that brings extream and eternal Miſery, they think it a ſaving Bargain. Amazing Folly! Either they believe or do not, the Recompences in the future State: if they do not, how unaccountable is their Impiety? If they do, 'tis more prodigious they do not *feel the Powers of the World to come*, ſo as to regulate their Lives, and controul the ſtrongeſt Tempta-

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tions to ſin againſt God. A wicked Believer is more guilty than a wicked Infidel. How could we conceive it poſſible, were it not viſible in their Actions, that Men who have judicative Faculties to compare and diſtinguiſh things, and accordingly be moved with Deſires or Fears, ſhould with ardent Affections purſue deſpicable Vanities, and neglect ſubſtantial Happineſs, and be fearful of the Shadows of Dangers, and intrepid in the midſt of the trueſt Dangers! He is a deſperate Gameſter that will venture a Crown at a Throw, againſt ſome petty Advantage: yet this is really done by Sinners who hazard the loſs of Heaven for this World: they hang by ſlender Strings, a little Breath that expires every moment, over bottomleſs Perdition, and are inſenſible, without any palpitation of Heart, any ſign of Fear.

How ſtrong is the Deluſion and Concupiſcence of the carnally-minded? The Luſts of the Fleſh bribe and corrupt their Underſtandings, or divert them from ſerious Conſideration of their Ways, and the Iſſues of them. From hence it is they are preſently entangled and vanquiſh'd by ſenſual Temptations; they are cozen'd by the Colours of Good and Evil, and Satan eaſily accompliſhes his moſt pernicious and envious Deſign, to make Men miſerable as himſelf. How juſt is the Reproach of Wiſdom, *How long ye ſimple ones will ye love Simplicity, and Fools hate Knowledg?* The Light of Reaſon and Revelation ſhines upon them, they have not the excuſe of Ignorance, but the righteous and heavy *Condemnation of thoſe who love Darkneſs rather than Light, becauſe their Deeds are evil.* 'Tis no mean degree of Guilt to extenuate Sin, and make an Apology for Sinners.

ners. The wiſeſt of Men tells us, *Fools make a mock of Sin*: they count it a fond Niceneſs, a ſilly Preciſeneſs to be fearful of offending God. They boaſt of their deceitful Arts and Inſinuations, whereby they repreſent Sin as a light matter, to corrupt others. But 'tis infinitely better to be defective in the Subtilty of the Serpent, than in the Innocence of the Dove. A meer Natural, who is only capable of ſenſitive Actions, and is diſtinguiſh'd from a Brute by his ſhape, is not ſuch a forlorn Sot, as the ſinful Fool. What the Prophet *Jeremy* ſpeaks of one who gets Riches unjuſtly, that he ſhall leave them, and *in the end die a Fool*, will be verified of the wilful obſtinate Sinner: in the end he ſhall by the terrible Conviction of his own Mind, be found guilty of the moſt woful Folly: and how many have acknowledged in their laſt hours, when uſually Men ſpeak with

with the most feeling and least Affectation, how have they in words of the Psalmist arraigned themselves, *So foolish have we been, and like Beasts before thee?*

2. From hence we may be instructed of the wonderful Patience of God, who bears with a World of Sinners, that are obnoxious to his Justice, and under his Power every day. If we consider the number and aggravations of Mens Sins, how many have out-told the Hairs of their Heads in actual Transgressions; how mighty and manifest their Sins are, that the Deity and Providence are questioned for the suspending of Vengeance? And yet that God notwithstanding all their enormous Injuries, and violent Provocations, is patient towards Sinners, it cannot but fill us with Admiration. His Mercy, like the cheerful Light of the Sun, visits us every Morning with its

its benign Influences; his Juſtice, like Thunder, rarely ſtrikes the Wicked. He affords not only the Supports of Life, but many Comforts and Refreſhments to the unthankful and rebellious.

'Tis not from any Defect in his Power that they are not conſum'd, but from the Abundance of his Mercy. He made the World without any ſtrain of his Power, and can as eaſily deſtroy it: he has an innumerable Company of Angels attending his Commands; and every Angel is an Army in ſtrength: one of them deſtroyed an hundred and fourſcore and five thouſand in a Night. He can uſe the moſt deſpicable and weakeſt Creatures, Frogs, and Lice, and Flies, as Inſtruments of Vengeance to ſubdue the proudeſt *Pharaoh*, the moſt obſtinate Rebels.— He ſees Sin where-ever it is, and hates it where-ever he ſees it; yet his Patience endures

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their crying Sins, and his long-Suffeing expects their Repentance. *The Lord is not ſlack, as ſome Men count ſlackneſs, but he is long-ſuffering to us-ward, not willing that any ſhould periſh, but that all ſhould come to Repentance.* He ſpares Sinners with ſuch Indulgence, in order to their Salvation. 'Tis deſervedly one of his Royal Titles, *The God of Patience.* Our fierce Spirits are apt to take Fire and Revenge for every Injury real, or ſuppos'd; but the great God, who is infinitely ſenſible of all the Indignities offer'd to his Majeſty, *defers his Anger, and loads them with his Benefits every day.* What is more aſtoniſhing than *the Riches of his Goodneſs*, unleſs it be the perverſe Abuſe of it by Sinners, to harden themſelves in their Impieties? But altho his Clemency delays the Puniſhment, the Sacredneſs and Conſtancy of his Juſtice will not forget it: *when Patience has had its perfect work*, Juſtice

ſhall

ſhall have a ſolemn Triumph in the final Deſtruction of impenitent unreformed Sinners.

3. The Conſideration of the Evil of Sin, ſo great in it ſelf, and pernicious to us, heightens our Obligations to the Divine Mercy, in ſaving *us from our Sins*, and an everlaſting Hell, the juſt Puniſhment of them. Our Loſs was unvaluable, our Miſery extream, and without infinite Mercy, we had been under an unremediable neceſſity of ſinning and ſuffering for ever. God ſaw us in this wretched and deſperate State, *and his Eye affected his Heart, in his Pity he redeemed* and reſtored us. This is the cleareſt Teſtimony of pure Goodneſs: for God did not want external Glory, who is infinitely happy in his own Perfections: he could, when Man revolted from his Duty, have created a new World of innocent Creatures: for infinite Power is not

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ſpent nor leſſened by finite Productions, but his undeſerved and undeſired Mercy appeared in our Salvation. The way of accompliſhing it, renders Mercy more illuſtrious: for to glorify his Juſtice, and preſerve the Honour of his Holineſs unblemiſh'd, he laid upon his Son *the Iniquity of us all.* This was Love that paſſeth all Underſtanding: Our Saviour ſpeaks of it with Admiration; *God ſo loved the World*, and hated Sin, *that he gave his only begotten Son to die for it; that whoſoever believes in him, ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting Life.*

And how dear are our Engagements to Jeſus Chriſt? The Judg would not releaſe the Guilty without a Ranſom, nor the Surety without Satisfaction; and the Son of God moſt compaſſionately and willingly gave his precious Blood to obtain our Deliverance. If his Perfections were not moſt amiable

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and raviſhing, yet that he died for us, ſhould infinitely endear him to us. *To thoſe who believe, he is precious*: to thoſe who have felt their undone Condition, and that by his Merits and Mediation, are reſtored to the Favour of God, he is eminently precious. Who can break *the Conſtraints of ſuch Love?* If there be a ſpark of Reaſon, or a grain of unfeigned Faith in us, *We muſt judg, that if one died for all, then all were dead; and thoſe that live, ſhould live to his Glory, who died for their Salvation.*

Add to this, that in the Sufferings of Chriſt there is the cleareſt Demonſtration of the Evil of Sin, and how hateful it is to God, if we conſider the Dignity of his Perſon, the Greatneſs of his Sufferings, and the innocent Recoilings of his Human Nature from ſuch fearful Sufferings. He was the Eternal Son of God, the Heir of his

his Father's Love and Glory, the Lord of Angels; he ſuffered in his Body the moſt ignominious and painful Death, being nail'd to the Croſs in the ſight of the World: The Sufferings of his Soul were incomparably more afflicting: For tho heavenly meek, he endured the Deriſion and cruel Violence of his Enemies with a ſilent Patience; yet in the dark Eclipſe of his Father's Countenance, in the deſolate ſtate of his Soul, *the Lamb of God opened his Mouth* in that mournful Complaint, *My God, my God, why haſt thou forſaken me?* His innocent Nature did ſo recoil from thoſe fearful Sufferings, that with repeated Ardency of Affection, he deprecated that bitter Cup; *Abba, Father, all things are poſſible to Thee; let this Cup paſs me:* He addreſs'd to the Divine Power and Love, the Attributes that relieve the Miſerable, yet he drank off the Dregs

Dregs of the Cup of God's Wrath. Now we may from hence conclude, how great an Evil Sin is, that could not be expiated by a meaner Sacrifice, *than the offering up the Soul of Christ* to atone incensed Justice; and no lower a Price, than the Blood of the Son of God, the most invaluable Treasure, could ransom Men who were devoted to Destruction.

4. The Consideration of the Evil of Sin in it self and to us, should excite us with a holy Circumspection to keep our selves from being defiled with it. 'Tis our indispensable Duty, our transcendent Interest to obey the Divine Law entirely and constantly. The Tempter cannot present any Motives, that to a rectified Mind are sufficient to induce a Consent to Sin, and offend God. Let the Scales be even, and put into one all the Delights of the Senses, all the Pleasures and Ho-

nours of the World, which are the Elements of Carnal Felicity, how light are they againſt the Enjoyment of the bleſſed God in Glory? Will the Gain of this periſhing World, compenſate the loſs of the Soul and Salvation for ever? If there were any poſſible Compariſon between empty deluding Vanities, and Celeſtial Happineſs, the Choice would be more difficult, and the Miſtake leſs culpable; but they vaniſh into nothing in the Compariſon; ſo that to commit the leaſt Sin that makes us liable to the forfeiture of Heaven, for *the Pleaſures of Sin that are but for a ſeaſon*, is Madneſs in that degree, that no words can expreſs. Suppoſe the Tempter inſpires his Rage into his Slaves, and tries to conſtrain us to Sin by Perſecution; how unreaſonable is it to be diſmayed at the Threatnings of Men, *who muſt die*, and who can only touch

touch the Body; and to *despise the Terrors of the Lord*, who lives for ever, and can punish for ever? Methinks we should look upon the perverted raging World, as a Swarm of angry Flies, that may disquiet, but cannot hurt us. *Socrates*, when unrighteously prosecuted to Death, said of his Enemies, with a Courage becoming the Breast of a Christian, *They may kill me, but cannot hurt me.* How should these Considerations raise in us an invincible Resolution and Reluctancy against the Tempter, in all his Approaches and Addresses to us? *And that we may so resist him, as to cause his flight from us*, let us imitate the excellent Saint, whose Example is set before us.

(1.) By possessing the Soul with a lively and solemn Sense of God's Presence, who is the Inspector and Judg of all our Actions. *Joseph* repell'd the Temptation with this

powerful Thought, *How shall I sin against God? The Fear of the Lord is clean*; 'tis a watchful Sentinel, that resists Temptations without, and suppresses Corruptions within: 'Tis like the Cherubim plac'd with a flaming Sword in Paradise, to prevent the Re-entry of *Adam* when guilty and polluted. For this end we must, by frequent and serious Considerations, represent the Divine Being and Glory in our Minds, that there may be a gracious Constitution of Soul; this will be our Preservative from Sin: for altho the habitual Thoughts of God are not always in act, yet upon a Temptation they are presently excited, and appear in the view of Conscience, and are effectual to make us reject the Tempter with Defiance and Indignation.

This holy Fear is not a meer judicial Impression, that restrains from Sin, for the dreadful Punishment

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that follows; for that ſervile Affection, tho it may ſtop a Temptation, and hinder the Eruption of a Luſt into the groſs Act, yet it does not renew the Nature, and make us Holy and Heavenly. There may be a reſpective Diſlike of Sin with a direct Affection to it. Beſides, a meer ſervile Fear is repugnant to Nature, and will be expell'd if poſſible. Therefore, that we *may be in the Fear of the Lord all the day long*, we muſt regard him in his endearing Attributes, his Love, his Goodneſs and Compaſſion, his rewarding Mercy; and this will produce a filial Fear of Reverence and Caution, leſt we ſhould offend ſo gracious a God. As the natural Life is preſerved by grateful Food, not by Aloes and Wormwood, which are uſeful Medicines; ſo the Spiritual Life is maintained by the comfortable Apprehenſions of God, as the Rewarder of our

Fidelity in all our Trials.

(2.) Strip Sin of its Diſguiſes, waſh off its flattering Colours, that you may ſee its native Uglineſs. *Joſeph*'s reply to the Tempter, *How ſhall I do this great Wickedneſs?* Illuſion and Concupiſcence are the Inducements to Sin: When a Luſt repreſents the Temptation as very alluring, and hinders the Reflection of the Mind, upon the intrinſick and conſequential Evil of Sin, 'tis like the putting Poiſon into the Glaſs: but when it has ſo far corrupted the Mind, that Sin is eſteemed a ſmall Evil, Poiſon is thrown into the Fountain. If we conſider the Majeſty of the Lawgiver, there is no Law ſmall, nor Sin ſmall, that is the Tranſgreſſion of it. Yet the moſt are ſecure in an evil courſe, by Conceits that their Sins are ſmall. 'Tis true, there is a vaſt difference between Sins in their Nature and Circumſtances: there are inſenſible

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Omissions and accusing Acts, but the least is damnable. Besides, the allowance and number of Sins reputed small, will involve under intolerable Guilt. What is lighter than a Grain of Sand? you may blow away a hundred with a Breath; And what is heavier than a heap of Sand condens'd together? 'Tis our Wisdom and Duty to consider the Evil of Sin in its essential Malignity, which implies no less, than that God was neither wise nor good in making his Law, and that he is not just and powerful to vindicate it: And when tempted to any pleasant Sin, to consider the due Aggravations of it, as *Joseph* did, which will controul the Efficacy of the Temptation. I shall only add, that when a Man has mortified the Lusts of the Flesh, he has overcome the main part of the infernal Army *that wars against the Soul*. Sensual Objects do power-

fully and pleaſantly inſinuate into carnal Men, and the Affections are very unwillingly reſtrain'd from them. To undertake the Cure of thoſe, whoſe Diſeaſe is their Pleaſure, is almoſt a vain Attempt: for they do not judg it an Evil to be regarded, and will not accept diſtaſteful Remedies.

(3.) Fly all tempting occaſions of Sin. *Joſeph* would not be alone with his Miſtreſs. There is no Vertue ſo confirmed, and in that degree of Eminence, but if one be frequently ingaged in vicious Society, 'tis in danger of being eclips'd and controul'd by the oppoſite Vice. If the Ermins will aſſociate with the Swine, they muſt lie in the Mire: if the Sheep with Wolves, they muſt learn to bite and devour: if Doves with Vultures, they muſt learn to live on the Prey. Our ſureſt Guard is to keep at a diſtance from all engaging Snares.

Snares. He that from Careleſneſs or Confidence ventures into Temptations, makes himſelf an eaſy Prey to the Tempter.

And let us daily pray for the Divine Aſſiſtance to keep us from the Evil of the World; without which all our Reſolutions will be as ineffectual as Ropes of Sand, to bind us to our Duty.

5. The Conſideration of the Evil of Sin is a powerful Motive to our ſolemn and ſpeedy Repentance. The remembrance of our Original and Actual Sins, will convince us, that we are born for Repentance. There are innumerable ſilent Sins, that are unobſerved, and do not alarm the Conſcience: and altho a true Saint will neither hide any Sin, nor ſuffer Sin to hide it ſelf in his Breaſt, yet the moſt holy Men in the World, have great reaſon with the Pſalmiſt, to ſay with melting Affections, *Who can underſtand his*

his Errors? O cleanse me from my secret Sins; discover them to me by the Light of the Word, and cover them in the Blood of the Redeemer. There are Sins of Infirmity and daily Incursion, from which none can be perfectly freed in this mortal State: these should excite our Watchfulness, and be lamented with true Tears. There are crying Sins of a Crimson Guilt, which are to be confest with heart-breaking Sorrow, confounding Shame, and implacable Antipathy against them, and to be forsaken for ever. Of these, some are of a deep die in their Nature, and some from the Circumstances in committing them; some are of a heinous Nature, and more directly and expressly renounce our Duty, and more immediately obstruct our Communion with God: As a Mud-Wall intercepts the Light of the Sun from shining upon us.

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2. Some derive a greater Guilt from the Circumstances in the commission. Such are,

(1.) Sins against Knowledg: for according to the Ingrediency of the Will in Sin, the Guilt arises. Now when Conscience interposes between the Carnal Heart and the Temptation, and represents the Evil of Sin, and deters from Compliance, and yet Men will venture to break the Divine Law, this exceedingly aggravates the Offence; for such Sins are committed with a fuller Consent, and are justly called Rebellion against the Light. And the clearer the Light is, the more it will increase the disconsolate fearful Darkness in Hell.

(2.) Sins committed against the Love as well as the Law of God, are exceedingly aggravated. To pervert the Benefits we receive from God to his Dishonour, to turn them into occasions of Sin, which were designed

designed to endear Obedience to us; to sin licentiously and securely in hopes of an easy Pardon at last, is intensive of our Guilt in a high degree. This is to poison the Antidote, and make it deadly. There is a Sacrifice to reconcile offended Justice; but if Men obstinately continue in Sin, and abuse the Grace of the Gospel, there is no Sacrifice to appease exasperated Mercy.

(3.) Sins committed against solemn Promises and Engagements to forsake them, have a deeper Die: for Perfidiousness is join'd with this Disobedience. The Divine Law strictly binds us to our Duty, antecedently to our Consent; but when we promise to obey it, we increase our Obligations, and by sinning, break double Chains. In short, any habitual allowed Sin, induces a heavy Guilt; for it argues a deeper root and foundation of Sin in the Heart, a stronger Inclination to it,

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from whence the repeated Acts proceed, which are new Provocations to the pure Eyes of God. Accordingly in repenting Reflections, our Sorrow ſhould be moſt afflicting, our Humiliation deeper, our Self-condemnation moſt ſevere for thoſe Sins which have been moſt diſhonourable to God, and defiling to us. Not that we can make any Satisfaction for our Sins, tho we ſhould fill the Air with our Sighs, and Heaven with our Tears; but it becomes us to have our Sorrows inlarged in ſome proportion to our Unworthineſs. And this mournful Diſpoſition prepares us for the Grace of God. The Law does not allow Repentance, but exacts entire Obedience: 'tis the Privilege of the Goſpel, that repenting Sinners are aſſur'd of Forgiveneſs: without this Qualification 'tis inconſiſtent with the Majeſty, Purity and Juſtice of God, to extend pardoning Mercy to Sinners: for they

they will never value, nor humbly and ardently seek for Mercy, till they feel the woful Effects of Sin in their Conscience: only the stung *Israelite* would look to the brazen Serpent. And this is requisite to prevent our relapsing into Sin: for the Dominion of Sin being founded in the Love of Pleasure, the proper means to extinguish, it is by a bitter Repentance: the Heart is first broken *for* Sin, and then *from* it.

To conclude; Let us renew our Repentance every day: let not the Wounds of our Spirits putrify: *let not the Sun go down upon God's Wrath*: let us always renew the Application of Christ's Blood that alone can cleanse us from Sin.

SERMON III.

1 JOHN V. 2.

By this we know we are the Children of God, if we love God, and keep his Commandments.

OF all the Marks that are useful in the Trial of our Spiritual State in reference to Eternity, there is none affords a more clear and comfortable Assurance of God's special and saving Mercy, than Love to the Saints. This has often resolved the Doubts, and quieted the Fears of afflicted enquiring Souls, when other Graces have not been so apprehensible in their Operations. But there is no Mark which the deceitful Heart does more securely

curely reſt upon, through the miſtake of Natural Human Love for that which is Spiritual and Divine: It is therefore moſt worthy our ſerious Thoughts, the Deceit being ſo eaſy and infinitely dangerous, to ſhew what is the unfeigned genuine Love of the Brethren, to which Salvation is annex'd, to confirm the humble ſincere Chriſtian, and undeceive preſuming Hypocrites.

The great Deſign of St. *John* in this Epiſtle, is to excite and enflame in Chriſtians the Love of God, and of their Brethren, the two comprehenſive Duties, and bright Sum of the Law, our principal Perfections in Heaven and Earth. Theſe he recommends by the moſt affectionate and obliging, the moſt warming, melting Perſwaſives; the ſuperlative Love of God to us, and our Communion with the Saints in Nature and Grace.

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In the former Verſe the Apoſtle argues from the reality of the Effect, as an Evidence of the Cauſe. *Whoever believes that Jeſus is the Chriſt*, that is, the Saviour of the World, foretold by the Prophets, and expreſſes the Truth of that Faith in a ſutable Converſation, *is born of God; and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him alſo that is begotten of him.* Grace is not leſs powerful in producing tender reciprocal Affections between the Off-ſpring of the ſame Heavenly Father, than the ſubordinate Endearments of Nature. The Pretence is vain of Love to God, without loving his regenerate Children. And in the Text he argues from the knowledg of the Cauſe, to the diſcovering of the ſincerity of the Effect: *By this we know that we love the Children of God*, with a holy Affection, *if we love God, and keep his Commandments.*

There is but one Difficulty to be removed, that the Force of the Apoſtle's reaſoning may appear; 'tis this, a *Medium* to prove a thing muſt be a clearer Evidence than what is concluded by it: Now tho a Demonſtration from the Cauſe be more noble and ſcientifical, yet that which is drawn from the Effect, is more near to Senſe, and more diſcernable. And this is verified in the Inſtance before us; for the Love of God, who is abſolutely ſpiritual in his Being and Excellencies, doth not with that ſenſible Fervour affect and paſſionately tranſport us, as Love to his Children, with whom we viſibly converſe, and who are receptive of the moſt ſenſible Teſtimonies of our Affection. Accordingly the Apoſtle argues, *He that loves not his Brother whom he hath ſeen, how can he love God whom he hath not ſeen?* As the Motives to love our Brethren, from our Cojunction in Nature,

Nature, and familiar Converſation, are more capable to allure our Affections, and more ſenſibly ſtrike the Heart than the inviſible Deity, who is infinitely above us; by the ſame reaſon we may more eaſily judg of the truth of our Love to them, than of our Love to God. To this the Anſwer is clear; the Apoſtle doth not ſpeak of the Love of God, as a ſtill, ſilent, contemplative Affection, confined to the ſuperiour Faculty of the Soul, but as a burning, ſhining Affection (like Fire *) active and declarative of it ſelf in thoſe Effects that neceſſarily flow from it, that is voluntary Obedience to his Commands; and thus it becomes manifeſt to the renewed Conſcience, and is a moſt convincing Proof of the Sincerity of our Love to the Saints.

* Lumine qui ſemper proditur ipſi ſuo.

The Text being cleared, affords this Doctrine.

Doct. *The Sincerity of our Love to the Children of God, is certainly discovered by our Love to God, and Obedience to his Commands.*

For the Illustration and Proof of the Point, I will briefly shew,

I. Who are described by this Title, *The Children of God.*

II. What is included in our Love to them.

III. What the Love of God is, and the Obedience that flows from it.

IV. How from Love to God, and willing Obedience to his Commands, we may convincingly know the Sincerity of our Love to his Children.

To explain the first, we must consider that this Title, *The Children of*

of God, is given upon several accounts.

First, By Creation the Angels are called *the Sons of God, and Men his Off-spring.*

The reason of the Title is,

1. The manner of their Production by his immediate Power. Thus he is stiled, *The Father of Spirits*, in distinction from *the Fathers of the Flesh.* For tho the Conception and forming of the Body be the Work of his secret Providence, yet 'tis by the hand of Nature, the Parents concurring as the second Causes of it: but the Production of the Soul is to be entirely ascribed to his Power, without the Intervention of any Creature.

2. In their spiritual immortal Nature, and the intellectual Operations flowing from it, there is an Image and Resemblance of God; from whence this Title is common

to all reasonable Creatures, and peculiar to them: for tho Matter may be ordered and fashioned by the Hand of God into a Figure of admirable Beauty, yet 'tis not capable of his Likeness and Image; so that neither the Lights of Heaven, nor the Beasts and Plants of the Earth are called his Children.

Secondly, By External Calling and Covenant some are denominated his Children; for by this Evangelical Constitution God is pleased to receive Believers into a filial Relation. Indeed where there is not a cordial Consent and Subjection to the Terms of the Covenant, visible Profession, and the receiving the External Seals of it, will be of no advantage; but the publick serious owning of the Gospel, entitles a Person to be of the Society of Christians; and *Filius* and *Fœderatus* are all one.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, There is Sonſhip that ariſes from ſupernatural Regeneration; that is the communicating a new Nature to Man, whereby there is a holy and bleſſed Change in the directive and commanding Faculties, the Underſtanding and Will, and in the Affections, and conſequently in the whole Life. This is wrought by the Efficacy of the Word and Spirit, and is called by our Saviour Regeneration, becauſe it is not our Original Carnal Birth, but a Second and Celeſtial. 'Tis with the new Man in Grace, as with an Infant in Nature, that has the eſſential Parts that compoſe a Man; a Soul endowed with all its Faculties, a Body with all its Organs and Parts, but not in the Vigor of mature Age. Thus renewed Holineſs in a Chriſtian, is compleat and entire in its Parts, but not in Perfection of Degrees; there is an univerſal Inclination to

all that is holy, just and good, and a universal Aversion from Sin, tho the Executive Power be not equal. And regenerate Christians are truly called the Children of God; for as in Natural Generation there is communicated a Principle of Life and suitable Operations, from whence the Title and Relation of a Father arises; so in Regeneration there are derived such holy and heavenly Qualities to the Soul, as constitute a *Divine Nature* in Man, whereby he is Partaker of the *Life* and *Likeness* of God himself: from hence he is a Child of God, and has an Interest and Propriety in his Favour, Power and Promises, and all the Good that flows from them, and a Title to the Eternal Inheritance.

II. I will shew what is included in our Love to the Children of God.

First,

First, The Principle of this Love is Divine. *The Soul is purified through the Spirit to unfeigned Love of the Brethren.* 1 Pet. 1. 22. Naturally the Judgment is corrupted, and the Will depraved, that carnal Respects either of Profit or Pleasure are the quick and sensible Incitements of Love; and till the Soul be cured of the sensual Contagion, the Inclination can never be directed, and the Desires fastned on the supernatural Image of God in his Saints. As Holiness in the Creature is a Ray derived from the infinite Beauty of God's Holiness, so the Love of Holiness is a Spark from the sacred Fire of his Love. St. *John* exhorts Christians, *Let us love one another, for Love is of God.* 1 Joh. 4. 7. Natural Love among Men is by his general Providence, but a gracious Love to the Saints is by his special Influence. The natural Affection must be *baptized with the Holy Ghost, as with*

with Fire, to refine it to a Divine Purity.

Secondly, The Qualifications of this Love are as follow:

1. It is ſincere and cordial; it does not appear only in Expreſſions from the Tongue and Countenance, but ſprings from the Integrity of the Heart. 'Tis ſtiled *unfeigned Love of the Brethren; 'tis a Love not in Word and Tongue only, but in Deed and Truth.* A counterfeit formal Affection, ſet off with artificial Colours, is ſo far from being pleaſing to God, the Searcher and Judg of Hearts, that 'tis infinitely provoking to him.

2. 'Tis pure; the attractive Cauſe of it is the Image of God appearing in them. Our Saviour aſſures us, that Love ſhall be glorioufly rewarded, that reſpects *a Diſciple upon that account as a Diſciple, and a righteous Man as a righteous Man.*

Man. The holy Love commanded in the Goſpel, is to Chriſtians for their Divine Relation, as the Children of God, as the Members of Chriſt, and Temples of the Holy Ghoſt.

3. From hence it is univerſal, extended to all the Saints. The Church is compoſed of Chriſtians that are different in their Gifts and Graces, and in their external Order; ſome excel in Knowledg, and Zeal, and Love, in active Graces; others in Humility, Meekneſs and Patience, that ſuſtain and adorn them in Sufferings; ſome are in a higher Rank, others are in humble Circumſtances: as in the viſible World things are placed ſutably to their Natures, the Stars in the Heavens, Flowers in the Earth: and our ſpecial Reſpects are due to thoſe whom the Favour of God has dignified above others, and in whom the Brightneſs and Power of Grace ſhines

shines more clearly: for according as there are more Reasons that make a Person deserving Love, the degrees of Love should rise in proportion. But a dear Affection is due even to the lowest Saints; for all have Communion in the same holy Nature, and are equally instated in the same blessed Alliance.

4. It must be fervent, not only in Truth, but in a degree of Eminency. St. *Peter* joins the two Qualifications; *See that ye love one another with a pure Heart fervently.* Our Saviour sets before us his own Pattern, as a Pillar of Fire to direct and inflame us; *This is my Commandment, that ye love one another as I have loved you.* *As I have loved you!* Admirable Example! His Love was singular and superlative; a Love that saves and astonishes us at once; for he willingly gave his precious Life for our Ransom. This we

John 15. 12.

should

should endeavour to resemble, tho our highest Expressions of Love and Compassion to the Saints, are but a weak and imperfect Imitation of his Divine Perfection.

I shall add farther; This Love includes all kinds of Love.

1. The Love of Esteem correspondent to the real Worth and special Goodness of the Saints. 'Tis one Character of a Citizen of Heaven, that *in his Eyes a vile Person is contemned*, however set off by the Glory of the World, and the Ornaments of the present State, that, as a false Mask, conceal their foul Deformity to carnal Persons; *but he honours them that fear the Lord*, tho disfigured by Calumnies, tho obscur'd and depress'd by Afflictions, and made like their blessed Head, in whom there was *no Form nor Comeliness in the Judgment of Fools.* In our Valuation, Divine Grace should Psal. 15.

ſhould turn the Scales againſt all the natural or acquired Perfections of Body or Mind; Beauty, Strength, Wit, Eloquence, human Wiſdom; againſt all the external Advantages of this Life, Nobility, Riches, Power, and whatever is admired by a carnal Eye. The Judgment and Love of God ſhould regulate ours. A Saint is more valued by God, than the higheſt Princes; nay, than the Angels themſelves, conſidered only with reſpect to their ſpiritual Nature. He calls them *his peculiar Treaſure*, *his Jewels*, *the firſt-Fruits of the Creatures*, ſacred for his Uſe and Glory, in compariſon of whom, the reſt of the World are but Dregs, a corrupt Maſs. They are ſtiled *his Sons*; being Partakers of that Life of which he is the Author and Pattern: And what are all the Titles on Earth, compared with ſo Divine a Dignity?

2. The

2. The Love of Desire, of their present and future Happiness. The Perfection of Love consists more in the Desire than in the Effects; and the continued fervent Prayers that the Saints present to God for one another, are the Expressions of their Love.

3. The Love of Delight, in spiritual Communion with them. All the Attractives of human Conversation, Wit, Mirth, Sweetness of Behaviour, and wise Discourse, cannot make any Society so dear and pleasant to one that is a Lover of Holiness, as the Communion of Saints. *David*, whose Breast was very sensible of the tender Affections of Love and Joy, tells us, That *the Saints in the Earth, the Excellent, were the chief Object of his Delight.* Psal. 16. And consequent to this, there is a cordial Sympathy with them in their Joys and Sorrows, being Members of the same Body, and having an Interest

Intereſt in all their Good or Evil. 'Tis obſervable, when the Holy Spirit deſcribes the ſweeteſt human Comforts that are the preſent Reward of the godly Man, the Enjoyment of his Eſtate in the dear Society of his Wife and Children, there is a Promiſe annex'd, that ſweetens all the reſt, That *he ſhall* Pſal. 128. *ſee the Good of* Jeruſalem, *and Peace upon* Iſrael. Without this all Temporal Comforts are mix'd with bitter Diſpleaſure to him. There is an eminent Inſtance of this in *Nehe-* Neh. 2. *miah*, whom all the Pleaſures of the *Perſian* Court could not ſatisfy, whilſt *Jeruſalem* was deſolately miſerable.

4. The Love of Service and Beneficence, that declares it ſelf in all outward Offices and Acts for the Good of the Saints: And theſe are various; ſome are of a ſublimer Nature, and concern their Souls; as ſpiritual Counſel and Inſtruction, com-

compassionate Admonition and Consolation, the confirming them in Good, and the fortifying them against Evil, the doing whatever may preserve and advance the Life and Vigor of the inward Man; others respect their Bodies and Temporal Condition; directing them in their Affairs, protecting them from Injuries, supplying their Wants, universally assisting them for their tolerable Passage through the World. And all these Acts are to be chearfully perfomed; there is more Joy in conferring than receiving a Benefit, because Love is more exercised in the one than the other. In short, the highest Effect of Love that comprizes all the rest, is to die for the Brethren; and this we ought to do when the Honour of God, and Welfare of the Church require it. *Hereby perceive we the Love of God, because he laid down his Life for us; and we ought to lay down*

our Lives for the Brethren. If Christians thus loved one another, the Church on Earth would be a lively Image of the bleſſed Society above.

III. The Love of God, and Obedience to his Commands, the Product of it are to be conſidered.

Firſt, The Love of God has its Riſe from the Conſideration of his amiable Excellencies, that render him infinitely worthy of the higheſt Affection; and from the bleſſed Benefits of Creation, Preſervation Redemption and Glorification, that we may expect from his pure Goodneſs and Mercy. This is the moſt clear and eſſential Character of a Child of God, and moſt peculiarly diſtinguiſhes him from unrenewed Men, however accompliſhed by Civil Vertues.

Now

Now the internal Exercise of Love to God, in the Valuation of his Favour, as that which is better than Life, in earnest Desires of Communion with him, in ravishing Joy in the Testimonies and Assurance of his Love, in mourning for what is displeasing to him, is in the secret of the Soul; but with this there is inseparably join'd a true and visible Declaration of our Love in Obedience to him. *This is the Love of God*, the most real and undeceitful Expression of it, *that we keep his Commandments.* 1 Joh. 3. 16.

The Obedience that springs from Love, is,

1. Uniform and universal; for the two principal and necessary Effects of Love are an ardent Desire to please God, and an equal Care not to displease him in any thing. Now the Law of God is the Signification of his Soveraign and Holy Will, and the doing of

it is very pleasing to him, both upon the account of the Subjection of the Creature to his Authority, and Conformity to his Purity: He declares that Obedience is better than the most costly Sacrifice. There is an absolute peremptory Repugnance between Love to him, and despising his Commands: And from thence it follows, that Love inclines the Soul to obey all God's Precepts, not only those of easy Observation, but the most difficult and distasteful to the Carnal Appetites; for the Authority of God runs through all, and his Holiness shines in all. Servile Fear is a partial Principle, and causes an unequal Respect to the Divine Law; it restrains from Sins of greater Guilt, from such disorderly and dissolute Actions at which Conscience takes Fire; but others are indulged: it excites to good Works of some kind, but neglects others that are equally

equally neceſſary. But Love regards the whole Law in all its Injunctions and Prohibitions; not meerly to pleaſe our ſelves, that we may not feel the ſtings of an accuſing Conſcience, but to pleaſe the Lawgiver.

2. The Obedience of Love is accurate; and this is a natural Conſequence of the former. The Divine Law is a Rule not only for our outward Converſation, but of our Thoughts and Affections, of all the interior workings of the Soul, that are open before God. Thus it requires Religious Service, not only in the external Performance, but thoſe reverent holy Affections, thoſe pure Aims, wherein the Life and Beauty, the Spirit and true Value of Divine Worſhip conſiſts. Thus it commands the Duties of Equity, Charity and Sobriety, all *Civil* and *Natural Duties* for Divine Ends, to *pleaſe* and *glorify God*. It forbids Heb. 13. 16.

all kinds and degrees of Sin; not only groſs Acts, but the inward Luſtings that have a tendency to them. Now the Love of God is the Principle of ſpiritual Perfection. 'Tis called *the fulfilling of the Law*, not only as it is a comprehenſive Grace, but in that it draws forth all the active Powers of the Soul to obey it in an exact manner. This cauſes a tender ſenſe of our Failings, and a ſevere Circumſpection over our Ways, that nothing be allowed that is diſpleaſing to the Divine Eyes. Since the moſt excellent Saints are God's chiefeſt Favourites, Love makes the holy Soul to ſtrive to be like him in all poſſible degrees of Purity. Thus St. *Paul*, in whom the Love of Chriſt was the imperial commanding Affection, declares, his zealous endeavour to be *conformable to the Death of Chriſt*, in dying to Sin, as Chriſt died for Sin, and that *he might attain to the Reſur-*

1 Cor. 10. 31.

Phil. 3. 10, 11.

Resurrection of the Dead, that Perfection of Holiness that is in the immortal State.

3. The Obedience of Love is chosen and pleasant. *This is the Love of God, that we keep his Commandments, and his Commandments are not grievous.* 1 Joh. 5. 3. Those that are Strangers to this Heavenly Affection, imagine that a sollicitous diligent Respect to all God's Precepts, is a melancholy Task; but it is delightful to the Saints: for Obedience is the continual exercise of Love to God, the Paradise of holy Souls. The mortification of the Carnal Appetites, and the restraint from such Objects as powerfully insinuate and engage Carnal Hearts, is with a freer Complacency to a Saint, than a sensual Fruition of them. The sharpest Sufferings for Religion are allayed, nay sweetned to a Saint from the Love of God, that is then most sincerely, strongly,

and purely acted. The Apoſtle more rejoiced in ſharp Tribulation for Chriſt's ſake, than in Divine Revelation.

4. The Love of God produces perſevering Obedience. Servile Compliance is inconſtant. A Slave hates the Duties he performs, and loves the Sins he dares not commit; therefore as ſoon as he is releas'd from his Chain and his Fear, his Obedience ceaſes: but a Son is perfectly pleas'd with his Father's Will, and the Tenor of his Life is correſpondent to it. He that is preſs'd by Fear to ſerve in an Army, will deſert his Colours the firſt Opportunity; but a Volunteer, that for the love of Valour, and of his Country, liſts himſelf, will continue in the Service. The Motion that is cauſed by outward Poiſes, will ceaſe when the Weights are down; but that which proceeds from an inward Principle of Life, is continual;

nual; and such is the Love of God planted in the Breast of a Christian.

IV. We are to prove that from the Love of God, and willing Obedience to his Commands, we may convincingly know the sincerity of our Love to his Children.

There is an inseparable Union between these two Graces, and the one arises out of the other. *Godliness* and *Brotherly Kindness* are joined by the Apostle. And it will be evident that where this Affection of Love to the Saints is sincere and gracious, there will be an entire and joyful respect to the Law of God, by considering the Reasons and Motives of it.

First, The Divine Command requires this Love. *These things I command you*, saith our Saviour, *that ye love one another*. This Precept so often repeated,

repeated, and powerfully re-inforc'd by him, made so deep an Impression on the first Christians, that *they had one Heart, and one Soul, and their Estates were common between them.* And in the next succeeding Ages, this fraternal Love was so conspicuous in the Professors of his sacred Discipline, that their Enemies observ'd it as a rare and remarkable thing: *See how the Christians love one another! see how ready they are to die for one another!* Now the same gracious Principle that inclines us to do one Command, will make us universally willing to observe all; for sincere Obedience primarily respects the Authority of the Lawgiver, which binds the whole Law upon the Conscience. And as he that *breaks the Law wilfully in one Point, is guilty of all*, because the Violation of a single Precept proceeds from the same Cause that induces Men to transgress all, that is, Contempt of the

Tert. Apol. c. 33.

James 2.

the Divine Majesty; so he that sincerely obeys one Command, does with consent of Heart, and serious Endeavours obey all. And from hence 'tis clear, that without a religious and unreserved regard of the Divine Commands, 'tis impossible there should be in any Person a gracious Affection to the Saints; that is the product of Obedience to God, and consequently the observance of his Precepts, is the certain Proof of our Love to his Children.

Secondly, Spiritual Love to the Saints arises from the sight of the Divine Image appearing in their Conversation. Now if the Beauty of Holiness be the attractive of our Love, it will be fastned on the Law of God in the most intense degree. The most excellent Saints on Earth have some mixtures of Corruption; their Holiness is like the Morning-light,

light, that is checker'd with the Shadows and Obscurity of the Night; and 'tis our Wisdom not to love their Infirmities, but to preserve an unstained Affection to them. But the Law of God is the faireſt Transcript of his Nature, wherein his glorious Holiness is most resplendent. *The Law of the*
Psal. 19. 7, 8. *Lord is perfect, converting the Soul; the Commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightning the Eyes.* This ravish'd the Heart of *David* with an inexpressible Affection. *O how I love*
Psal. 119. *thy Law! it is my Meditation all the day.* And he repeats the Declaration of his Love to it with new Fervor, upon this ground; *I love thy Law, because it is pure.* Now Love to the Commands of God will transcribe them in our Hearts and Lives. As affectionate Expressions to the Children of God, without the real supply of their Wants, are but the shadows of Love; so words of

of Esteem and Respect to the Law of God, without unfeigned and universal Obedience, are but an empty Pretence.

Thirdly, The Divine Relation of the Saints to God as their Father, is the Motive of Spiritual Love to them. And this is consequent to the former; for by partaking of his Holiness, they partake of his Life and Likeness. And from hence they are the dearest Objects of his Love; his Eye and Heart is always upon them. Now if this Consideration excites Love to the Children of God, it will be as powerful to incline us to keep his Commands; for the Law of God, that is the Copy of his Sacred Will, is most near to his Nature, and he is infinitely tender of it. Our Saviour tells us, that *it is easier for Heaven and Earth to pass away, than for one tittle of the Law* Luke 16. 17.

to

to fail. If the entire World, and all the Inhabitants of it were deſtroyed, there would be no loſs to God; but if the Law loſe its Authority and Obligation, the Divine Holineſs would ſuffer a Blemiſh.

The Uſe of the Doctrine is, to try our Love to the Children of God, to which all pretend, by this infallible Rule, our Obedience to his Commands. This is abſolutely neceſſary, becauſe the Deceit is ſo eaſy and ſo dangerous: and it will be moſt comfortable, if upon this Trial our Love be found to be Spiritual and Divine. The Deceit is eaſy, becauſe Acts of Love may be expreſſed to the Saints from other Principles than the Love of God: Some for vain-Glory are bountiful; and when their Charity ſeems ſo viſibly Divine, that Men admire it, there is the Worm of Vanity at the Root, that corrupts and makes

it

it odious to God. The Phariſees are charged with this by our Saviour; their Alms were not the Effect of Charity, but Oſtentation; and whilſt they endeavoured to make their Vices vertuous, they made their Vertues vicious. There is a natural Love among Perſons united by Conſanguinity, that remains ſo entire ſince the Ruine of Mankind by the Fall, and is rather from the force of Nature, than the virtue of the Will, and this is in all kind Offices may be expreſs'd to the Saints. There is a ſweetneſs of Temper in ſome, that inclines them to wiſh well to all, and ſuch tender Affections that are eaſily moved and melted at the ſight of others Miſeries; and ſuch may be beneficent and compaſſionate to the Saints in their Afflictions: but the Spring of this Love is Good-Nature, not Divine Grace. There are Human Reſpects that incline Mat. 6. 2.

others

others to Kindneſs to the Saints, as they are united by Intereſt, Fellow-Citizens and Neighbours, and as they receive Advantage by Commerce with them, or as obliged by their Benefits: But Civil Amity and Gratitude are not that holy Affection that is an Aſſurance of our Spiritual State. There are other Motives of Love to the Saints, that are not ſo low nor mercenary; in the thickeſt Darkneſs of Paganiſm, the Light of Reaſon diſcovered the amiable Excellence of Vertue, as becoming the Human Nature, and uſeful for the Tranquillity and Welfare of Mankind; and the Moral Goodneſs that adorns the Saints, the Innocence, Purity, Meekneſs, Juſtice, Clemency, Benignity, that are viſible in their Converſations, may draw Reſpects from others who are Strangers to the Love of God, and careleſs of his Commandments.

And

And as the Miſtake of this Affection is eaſy, ſo it is infinitely dangerous; for he that builds his hope of Heaven upon a *ſandy Foundation*, upon falſe Grounds, will fall ruinouſly from his Hopes and Felicity at laſt. How fearful will be the Diſappointment of one that has been a Favourer of the Saints, that has defended their Cauſe, protected their Perſons, relieved their Neceſſities, and preſum'd for this, that his Condition is ſafe as to Eternity, tho he lives in the known neglect of other Duties, and the indulgent Practice of ſome Sin?

But if we find that our Love to the Children of God flows from our Love to God, that ſways the Soul to an entire compliance to his Commands, and makes us obſervant of them in the courſe of our Lives: What a *bleſſed Hope* ariſes from this Reflection? We

need not have the Book of the Divine Decrees opened, and the Secrets of Election unvail'd; *for we*
1 Joh. 3. 14. *know that we are past from Death to Life, if we love the Brethren.* This is an infallible Effect and Sign of the Spiritual Life, and the Seed and Evidence of Eternal Life.

SER-

How to bear Afflictions.

SERMON IV.

HEBREWS xii. 5.

My Son despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him.

THE words are an excellent Passage from the Book of the *Proverbs*; wherein the Supream Eternal Wisdom is represented, giving Instruction to the Afflicted, how to behave themselves under Troubles, so as they may prove beneficial to them: the Counsel is, that they should preserve a Temperament of Spirit, between the excess and defect of Patience and Courage, Prov. 3. 12.

neither despising the Chastenings of the Lord, by a sinful neglect of them as a small unconcerning matter, nor fainting under them, as a Burden so great and oppressing, that no Deliverance was to be expected. To enforce the Exhortation, Wisdom useth the amiable and endearing Title, *My Son*, to signify that God in the quality of a Father, corrects his People; the Consideration whereof is very proper to conciliate Reverence to his Hand, and to encourage their Hopes of a blessed Issue.

The Proposition that arises from the Words is this;

'Tis the Duty and best Wisdom of afflicted Christians, to preserve themselves from the vicious Extreams of despising the Chastenings of the Lord, or fainting under them.

To

To illustrate this by a clear Method, I shall endevour to shew,

I. What it is to despise the Chastenings of the Lord, and the Causes of it.
II. What fainting under his Rebukes signifies, and what makes us incident to it.
III. Prove that 'tis the Duty and best Wisdom of the Afflicted to avoid these Extreams.
IV. Apply it.

First, To despise the Chastenings of the Lord, imports the making no account of them, as unworthy of serious Regard; and includes Inconsiderateness of Mind, and an Insensibleness of Heart. I. ὀλιγωρεῖ.

1. Inconsiderateness of Mind, with respect to the Author or End of Chastenings.

(1.) With respect to the Author, when the Afflicted looks only down- Job 5 6.

wards, as if the Rod of Affliction ſprang out of the Duſt, and there were no ſuperiour Cauſe that ſent it.

Thus many apprehend the Evils that befal them, either meerly as the Productions of Natural Cauſes, or as caſual Events, or the Effects of the Diſpleaſure and Injuſtice of Men, but never look on the other ſide of the Vail of the ſecond Cauſes, to that inviſible Providence that orders all. If a Diſeaſe ſtrikes their Bodies, they attribute it to the extremity of Heat or Cold, that diſtempers their Humours: if a Loſs comes in their Eſtates, 'tis aſcribed to Chance, Careleſneſs and Falſeneſs of ſome upon whom they depended; but God is concealed from their ſight by the nearneſs of the immediate Agent. Whereas the principal Cauſe of all Temporal Evils is the over-ruling Providence of God.

Amos 3. 6. *Shall there be Evil in a City, and the Lord*

Lord hath not done it? They come not only with his Knowledg and Will, but by his Efficiency. The Locuſts that infected *Egypt* are as real an Effect of God's Wrath, as the moſt miraculous Plague, altho an Eaſt Wind brought them, and a Weſt Wind carried them away. The Arrow that was ſhot at a venture, and pierc'd between the Joints of *Ahab*'s Armour, was directed by the Hand of God for his Deſtruction. *Shimei*'s curſing of *David*, tho it was the overflowing of his Gall, the Effect of his Malignity, yet that holy King look'd higher, and acknowledged the Lord hath bidden him. As the Lord is a God of Power, and can inflict what Judgments he pleaſeth immediately; ſo he is a God of Order, and uſually puniſheth in this World by ſubordinate means. Now where-ever he ſtrikes, tho his Hand is wrap'd up in a Cloud, yet if it be not ob-

Exod. 10. 13, 19.

1 Kings 22. 34.

1 Sam. 16. 11.

ſerved, eſpecially if by habitual Incogitancy Men conſider not with whom they have to do in their various Troubles, this profane neglect is no leſs than a deſpiſing the Chaſtenings of the Lord.

(2.) Inconſiderateneſs of the End of the Divine Diſcipline, is a great degree of Contempt. The Evils that God inflicts are as real a part of his Providence, as the Bleſſings he beſtows; as in the courſe of Nature the Darkneſs of the Night is by his Order, as well as the Light of the Day: therefore they are always ſent for ſome wiſe and holy Deſign. Sometime, tho more rarely, they are only for trial, to exerciſe the Faith, Humility, Patience of eminent Saints; for otherwiſe God would loſe in a great meaſure the Honour and Renown, and his Favourites the Reward of thoſe Graces, Afflictions being the Sphere of their Activity. But for the moſt

part

part they are caſtigatory, to bring us to a ſight and ſenſe of our State, to render Sin more evident and odious to us. They are fitly expreſt, by pouring from Veſſel to Veſſel, that diſcovers the Dregs and Sediment, and makes it offenſive, that before was concealed. The leaſt Affliction even to the Godly, is uſually an Application of the Phyſician of Spirits for ſome growing Diſtemper: every Corroſive is for ſome proud Fleſh that muſt be taken away. In ſhort, they are deliberate Diſpenſations to cauſe Men to reflect upon their Works and Ways, and break off their Sins by ſincere Obedience. Therefore we are commanded *to hear the Voice of the Rod, and who hath appointed it.* Mic. 6. 9. 'Tis a Preacher of Repentance, to lead us to the Knowledg and Conſideration of our ſelves. The Diſtreſs of *Joſeph*'s Brethren was to revive their Memory of his Sorrows cauſed by

by their Cruelty. Now when Men disregard the Embassy of the Rod, are unconvinceable, notwithstanding its lively Lessons; when they neither look up to him that strikes, nor within to the Cause that provokes his Displeasure; when they are careless to reform their Ways, and to comply with his holy Will, as if Afflictions were only common Accidents of this mutable State, the Effects of rash Fortune or blind Fate, without Design and Judgment, and not sent for their Amendment, this is a prodigious despising of God's Hand. For this reason the Scripture compares Men to the most inobservant Creatures, to *the wild Asses Colt*, *the deaf Adder*, *to the silly Dove without Heart*: and the Advantage is on the Beasts side, for their Inconsideration proceeds meerly from the Incapacity of Matter, of which they are wholly compos'd to perform reflex Acts: but Man's Incogi-

Job 11. 12.
Psal. 58. 4.
Hosea 7. 11.

Incogitancy is the sole fault of his Spirit, that wilfully neglects his Duty. The Prophet charges this Guilt upon the Jews, *Lord, when thy Hand is lifted up, they will not see.* Isa. 26. 11.

2. Insensibility of Heart is an eminent degree of despising the Lord's Chastenings. A pensive feeling of Judgments is very congruous, whether we consider them *in genere Physico*, or *Morali*; either materially as afflictive to Nature, or as the signs of Divine Displeasure: for the Affections were planted in the Human Nature by the Hand of God himself, and are duly exercised in proportion to the quality of their Objects. And when Grace comes, it softens the Breast, and gives a quick and tender sense of God's Frown. An eminent Instance we have in *David*, tho of Heroical Courage; yet in his sad ascent to Mount *Olivet*, he went up weeping with his Head covered, and 2 Sam. 15. 30.

his

his Feet bare, to testify his humble and submissive sense of God's Anger against him. Now when Men are insensible of Judgments, either considered as natural or penal Evils; if when they suffer the loss of Relations or other Troubles, they presently fly to the Comforts of the Heathens, that we are all mortal, and what can't be help'd must be endured, without the Sense Humanity requires; that Calm is like that of the dead Sea, a real Curse: Or suppose natural Affection works a little, yet there is no Apprehension and Concernment for God's Displeasure, which should be infinitely more affecting than any outward Trouble, how sharp soever, no serious deep Humiliation under his Hand, no yielding up our selves to his Management; this most justly provokes him: of this Temper were those described by *Jeremiah*, *Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved*; Jer. 5. 3.

grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they refused to receive Correction.

Secondly, The Causes of this despising of God's Chastenings are:

1. A contracted Stupidity of Soul, proceeding from a course in Sin. There is a natural Stubbornness and Contumacy in the Heart against God, a vicious Quality derived from rebellious *Adam*; we are all hewn out of the Rock, and dig'd out of the Quarry: and this is one of the worst Effects of Sin, and a great part of its Deceitfulness, that by stealth it increaseth the natural Hardness, by degrees it creeps on like a Gangreen, and causes an Indolency. Heb. 3. 13. The Practice of Sin makes the Heart like an Adamant, the hardest of Zech. 7. 12. Stones, that exceeds that of Rocks. From hence proceeds such Unteachableness of the Mind, that when God speaks and strikes, yet Sinners will not be convinc'd; that Briars and

and Thorns are only effectual to teach them; and such an Untractableness in the Will, that when the Sinner is stormed by Affliction, and some Light breaks into the Understanding, yet it refuseth to obey God's Call.

2. Carnal Diversions are another Cause of slighting God's Hand. The Pleasures and Cares of the World, as they render Men inapprehensive of Judgments to come, so regardless of those that are present. Some when ever they feel the Smart of a Cross, use all the Arts of Oblivion to lose the Sense of it. The Affliction instead of a leading them to Repentance, leads them to vain Conversations, to Comedies and other sinful Delights, to drive away Sorrow. Others, altho they do not venture upon forbidden things to relieve their Melancholy, yet when God by sharp and sensible Admonitions calls upon them, they have present-

Luke 21. 34.

presently recourse to Temporal Comforts, which altho lawful and innocent in themselves, yet are as unproper at that time, as the taking of a Cordial when a Vomit begins to work: for whereas Chastisements are sent to awaken and affect us, by considering our Sins in their bitter Fruits, this unseasonable Application of sensual Comforts wholly defeats God's Design. For nothing so much hinders serious Consideration as a voluptuous indulging the Senses in things pleasing; like Opiate Medicines, they stupify the Conscience, and benumn the Heart. 'Tis *Solomon's* Expression, *I said of Laughter, It is mad*: for as Distraction breaks the Connexion of the Thoughts, so Mirth shuffles our most serious Thoughts into disorder, and causes Men to pass over their Troubles without Reflection and Remorse. 1 Kings 16.

And

And as the Pleaſures, ſo the Buſineſs of the World cauſe a ſupine Security under Judgments. We have an amazing Inſtance of it in *Hiel* the Bethlemite, who laid the Foundation of his City in the Death of his Firſt-born, and ſet up the Gates of it in his youngeſt Son; yet he was ſo intent upon his Building, that he diſregarded the Divine *Nemeſis*, that was apparent, fulfilling the terrible Threatning propheſied againſt the Builder of *Jericho*.

Joſhua 6. 26.

3. An obſtinate fierceneſs of Spirit, a Diabolical Fortitude is the Cauſe that ſometimes Men deſpiſe afflicting Providences ſo far as to reſiſt them. There is a paſſive Malignity in all, an Unaptneſs to be wrought on, and to receive Spiritual and Heavenly Impreſſions from God's Hand; but in ſome of the Sons of Perdition there is an active Malignity, whereby they furiouſly repel

repel Judgments as if they could oppose the Almighty. Their Hearts are of an Anvil-Temper, made harder by Afflictions, and reverberate the Blow, like that Roman Emperor, who instead of humbling and reforming at God's Voice in Thunder, thundred back again. All Judgments that befal them, are as Strokes given to wild Beasts, that instead of taming them, enrage them to higher degrees of Fierceness.

The Prophet described some of this Rank of Sinners, who said *in the Pride and Stoutness of their Hearts, the Bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewen Stones: the Sycomores are cut down, but we will change them into Cedars.* Isa. 9. 9, 10.

And many though not Explicitly, yet virtually declare a Resolution notwithstanding the most visible Discouragements from Heaven, to proceed in their sinful courses

with more greedineſs, and from a ſullen ſecret Atheiſm are more ſtrongly carried to gratify their Luſts again, when they are in Afflictions.

II. I ſhall proceed to conſider the other Extream of fainting under God's Rebukes.

ἐκλύσ. 1. The Original Word ſignifies the ſlackening and relaxing of things that were firmly join'd together. The Strength of the Body proceeds from the Union of the Parts, when they are well compacted together. By their disjointing 'tis enfeebled, and rendred unfit for Labour. In this Motion the Apoſtle in the 12*th* Verſe *exhorts them to lift up the Hands that hang down, and ſtrengthen the feeble Knees*: That is, to encourage and ſtrengthen their Souls by a real belief of the Promiſes made to afflicted Chriſtians.

2. It

2. It may respect the sinking, and falling away of the Soul like Water, being hopeless of overcoming Troubles. When Water is frozen into hard Ice, it will bear a great Burden, but when 'tis dissolved and melted, nothing is weaker. So the *Spirit of a Man* confirmed by religious Principles, *is able to sustain all his Infirmities. Si fractus illabitur orbis*, if the Weight of the heaviest Afflictions fall upon him, yet his Mind remains erect and unbroken, and bears them all with Courage and Constancy: But if through Impatience under Tribulation, and Diffidence in the Divine Promises, we shrink from our Duty, or reject *the Comforts of God as if they were small*, and not proportionable to the Evils that oppress us; this is to faint when we are rebuked by him. Prov. 19: 14.

The Causes of this Despondency are usually;

(1.) Either the kind of the Affliction: when there is a Singularity in the case, it increaseth the Apprehension of God's Displeasure; because it may signify an extraordinary Guilt, and singular Unworthiness in the Person that suffers; and upon that account, that Sorrow swells so high as to overwhelm him.

(2.) The number and degrees of Afflictions; when like those black Clouds which in Winter-Days join together, and quite intercept the Beams of the Sun: so many Troubles meet at once, and deprive us of all present Comfort. *Job* lost his Children by a sudden unnatural Death; and was tormented in all the Parts of his Body, and reduced from his rich Abundance to the Dunghil, and a Potsherd to scrape his Boils. Indeed his Heroical Spirit was supported under those numerous and grievous Troubles, but

but such a Weight were enough to sink the most.

(3.) The continuance of Afflictions. When the Clouds return after Rain, and the Life is a constant Scene of Sorrows, we are apt to be utterly dejected, and hopeless of Good. The Psalmist tells us, *All the Day long I have been plagued, and chastened every Morning*; and from thence was strongly tempted to Despair. Psal. 73. 14.

(4.) Comparing their great Sufferings with the Prosperity of those who are extreamly vicious, inclines some to Despair. For not only their present Evils are heightened, and more sensibly felt by the Comparison, but the prosperous Impiety of others tempts them to think there is no just and powerful Providence that distributes things below; and looking no higher than to Second Causes, that are obvious to Sense, they judg their State past Recovery.

III. The next thing is to prove, that 'tis the Duty and Wisdom of the Afflicted not to Despise the Chastenings of the Lord, nor to faint under them.

First, 'Tis their Duty carefully to avoid those Extreams, because they are very dishonourable to God.

1. The Contempt of Chastisements is high Profanation of God's Honour, who is our Father and Soveraign, and in that Quality afflicts us: 'Tis our Apostle's Argument,

Heb. 12. 9. *Furthermore, we have had Fathers of our Flesh which corrected us, and we gave them Reverence; shall we not much more be subject to the Father of Spirits, and live?* 'Tis a Principle deeply planted in the Human Nature, which the most barbarous Nations have kept inviolable, to express the realleſt Respect to our Parents, from whom we derive our Life, and by whose tender

tender Care we have been preſerved, and educated, altho their Diſcipline be rigorous: but it is infinitely more juſt and reaſonable, that we ſhould reverently ſubmit to the Father of Spirits, who hath the higheſt Right in us. As much as the immortal Spirit excels the infirm corruptible Fleſh, proportionably ſhould our Reverence to God, when he moſt ſharply rebukes us, exceed our Reſpects to our Earthly Fathers when they correct us. The manner of the Apoſtle's Expreſſion is very ſignificant, *Shall we not much rather?* If there be any vital ſpark of Conſcience remaining in our Breaſts, if Reaſon be not wholly declined to Brutiſhneſs, we cannot do otherwiſe.

2. Fainting under Chaſtenings reflects diſhonourably upon God. 'Tis true in ſome reſpect, thoſe who are extreamly dejected, are not ſo guilty as the Deſpiſers; for uſually

they acknowledg the Order and Juſtice of his Providence. But that falſe Conception of the Father of Mercies, either that he willingly afflicts the Children of Men, or that he hates them becauſe he afflicts them here, is ſo contrary to his holy Nature, and injurious to his Goodneſs, the ſpecial Character of his Nature, that 'tis an equal Provocation, with the ſlighting his Soveraignty.

1 Joh. 4. 9.

SER-

SERMON V.

HEBREWS xii. 5.

My Son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him.

Secondly, I Shall proceed to prove, 'tis the best Wisdom not to despise God's Chastenings, nor faint under them. I will not insist upon the Consideration that 'tis the Counsel of the supream Wisdom to us, nor that 'tis the avoiding the vicious Extreams, which is the chiefest Point of Moral Prudence: but it is the only way to prevent the greatest Mischiefs that will

will otherwise befal us. 'Tis said, he that is wise is profitable to himself, that is either in obtaining Good, or preventing Evils. Now it will
Job 22. 21. appear how pernicious those Extreams are, by considering;

1. The Contempt of Chastenings, deprives us of all those Benefits which were intended by them. God's End in them is to imbitter Sin to our Taste, and make us distrelish that deadly Poison: for as, according to the Rules of Physick, Contraries are cured by Contraries; so Sin that prevails by Pleasure, by something delightful to the Carnal Part, is mortified by what is afflictive to Sense. Repentance is a Duty that best complies with Affliction: for when the Spirit is made sad, and brought to the Sobriety of Consideration, it will more readily reflect upon the true Causes of Troubles: When the Springs overflow, 'tis but directing the Stream into

into a right Channel, the changing the Object of our Grief, *viz.* mourning for Sin instead of sorrowing for outward Trouble, and we are in the way to Happiness. Sensible Sorrow leads to Godly Sorrow. The natural is first, then the spiritual. Now the Despisers of God's Hand, that are unaffected with Judgments, are incapable of this Benefit. For if they do not feel the Blow, how shall they take notice of the Hand that strikes? If they are not softened with Sorrows, how shall they receive the Divine Impression? If they have no sense of his Displeasure, how shall they fear to offend him for the future? If the Medicine doth not work, how can it expel noxious Humours?

2. The neglect of Chastenings doth not only render them unprofitable, but exposes to greater Evils.

(1.) It

(1.) It provokes God to withdraw his Judgments for a time. This the Sinner desired, and thinks himself happy that he is at ease: Miserable Delusion! This Respite is the Presage of his final Ruin. 'T was the desperate State of *Judah*, as God
Isa. 1. 5. expresses it, *Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more.* The words of an anxious Father that has tried all Methods, Counsel, Kindness, Corrections to reclaim a rebellious obstinate Son; and finding no answerable Effect, gives him over to follow the pernicious swinge of his corrupt Desires. No Severity is like the suffering him in his licentious Courses. Thus when God hath used many gracious ways to reduce the Sinner, by his Word, Spirit and Judgments, but he is inflexible to the Calls of the Word, impenetrable to the Motions of the Spirit, and insensible of afflicting Providences; when after a Combate with

with the Rod, Sin comes off unwounded, and the Rod retires; this Calm is more dreadful than the fierceſt Storm; nothing can be more fatal to the Sinner, for by this Divine Deſertion he is given over to a reprobate Mind, and vile Affections; he goes on undiſturb'd in his Sins, and every day increaſeth his Enmity againſt God, and provokes God's Enmity againſt him. 'Tis not conceivable that one who is not made pliable to the Grace of God by Afflictions, ſhould ſubmit when he is in pleaſant Circumſtances, and diſpos'd to enjoy ſenſual Satisfactions. If the Whip and Spur cannot break and tame the unruly Beaſt, certainly the rich Paſture will never make him manageable. So that God's ceaſing to puniſh the Sinner at preſent is ſo far from being a Favour, that 'tis the Effect of his deepeſt Diſpleaſure; for it contributes to his hardning. 'Twas

the

the Case of *Pharaoh*, when any of the Plagues were removed: Indulgence occasioned his Induration. As Water taken from the Fire, freezes sooner and harder, than if the thinner Parts had never been evaporated by the former Heat; so when Men are taken off from the Fire of Affliction, they are more confirmed in their vicious Courses than if they had never been afflicted.

(2.) The slighting of lighter Strokes, provokes God sometimes to bring more dreadful Judgments in this Life upon Sinners. No Man can endure that his Love or Anger should be despised. *Nebuchadnezzar* commanded the Furnace to be heated seven times hotter for those who contemned his Threatnings. God tells the *Israelites*, *If ye will not be reformed by these things, but will walk contrary unto me; Then will I also walk contrary unto you, and will punish*

Levit. 26. 23, 24.

punish you yet seven times for your Sins. He will change the Rods into Scorpions, and will scourge them for their continued Rebellions. 'Tis the intent of that Expostulation, *Shall one take up a Snare from the Earth, and have taken nothing at all?* Amos 3. 5. Shall God remove his Judgments while Sinners are careless and unreformed, as if they might be final Conquerors over them? no, he will multiply and greaten them. It may be at first God blasts part of the Estate, and the Sinner is not apprehensive of his Hand; then he comes nearer and snatches away a dear Relation: if still the Sinner is unaffected, he strikes his Body with a lingring, or acute Disease: if still he be not concern'd for God's Displeasure, he wounds his Spirit, makes him sick in Sense and Conscience at the same time, fills him with Terror by the Reflection upon his wicked Ways, and the fore-sight of

of that dreadful Tribunal before which he must appear; so that altho he cannot live, he dare not die; tho his Earthly Tabernacle be ready to fall upon him, he is afraid to go out and meet the supream Judg: and if this doth not work a sincere thorow Change, God casts him into Hell to the Company of the Giants, those bold Rebels that fought against God. Briefly, as under the Law, an incorrigible Son that neglected his Father's Reproofs, was to die without Mercy; so an unreformed Sinner who kicks against the Pricks, and refuses to submit to God's Corrections, shall be cut off in his Obstinacy; Justice will proceed to Excision, and Acts of Vengeance against him.

Prov. 21. 16.

Vid. Mr. *Mede* in loc.

(3.) Fainting under Chastenings is pernicious to Sufferers: for it renders them utterly indispos'd for the Performance of Duty, and unca-

uncapable of receiving the Comforts proper for an afflicted State.

1*st*. It renders them utterly indispos'd for the performance of Duty. Hope draws forth all the active Powers of the Soul; 'tis the great Motive to Diligence, and Instrument of Duty. Despair, like extremity of Cold that checks the Spring, and binds up the Earth that its Fruits cannot appear, hinders the free Exercise of Reason and Grace, and cuts the Sinews of Obedience. He that is hopeless of a good Issue out of Troubles, will neither repent, nor pray, nor reform, but indulges barren Tears instead of real Duties.

Besides, it often falls out, that the same Affliction is sent from God's Displeasure upon his People for their Sins, and is the Effect of the Rage of Men against them up-

on the account of their professing his Name. Such is the Wisdom and Goodness of God, that by the same fiery Trial he may refine his Servants from their Dross and Impurities, and render the Glory of the Gospel more *conspicuous*. The Hatred of Religion, and a blind Fury may transport Men to Acts of Cruelty against the Saints; but 'tis by the permission of the universal Soveraign, who hath the Hearts of all in his Hands, and suffers their Rage for holy Ends. The Enemy designs against their Faith, but God's Aim is to make them reform their Lives.

Now if either through strong Fears, or the stinging sense of Troubles upon the account of Religion, our Courage fails, we are presently in danger of falling away, and denying our Master. The faint-hearted Person is usually false-

hearted,

hearted, and for want of Resolution, being frighted out of his Conscience and Duty, chooses Sin rather than Suffering, and thereby justly deprives himself *of the Crown of Life*, that is promised only to *those who are faithful unto the Death.* Besides, not only the loss of Heaven, but the Torments of Hell are threaten'd against those who withdraw from the Service of God to avoid Temporal Evils. The *fearful and unbelieving are in the front of those that shall have part in the Lake of Fire and Brimstone, which is the second Death.* Now what Folly is it when two Evils are propounded, to choose the greatest; that is, Eternal Death rather than Temporal: and of two Goods to prefer the less; a short Life with its Conveniences on Earth, before that which is eternally glorious in Heaven? By which it appears how much

Rev. 21. 8.

it concerns us to fortify and fix our Minds by a ſtedfaſt Belief of God's ſupporting Preſence with us in all Troubles, and of his gracious Promiſe, that in due time we ſhall reap if we faint not in well-doing.

2*dly*. They are incapable of the Comforts proper to an afflicted State. Thoſe ariſe from the Be-
Rev. 3. lief, *that God loves whom he chaſtens*: for the leaſt Sin is a greater Evil than the greateſt Trouble; and his deſign is to take that away, and from the expectation of a happy Iſſue. Hope is the Anchor within the Vail, that in the midſt of Storms and rougheſt Seas, preſerves from Shipwrack. The Character of Chriſtians is, that they
Rom. 12. *are rejoicing in Hope*: But when the
12. Afflicted are under fearful Impreſſions that God is an irreconcile-

able

able Enemy, and ſadly conclude their Miſeries are paſt Redreſs, thoſe Divine Comforts that are able to ſweeten the moſt bitter Sufferings to Believers, are of no Efficacy. Their deep Sorrows are not like the Pains of a travailing Woman that end in a joyful Birth, but the killing Tortures of the Stone that are fruitleſs to the Patient. An obſtinate Grief, and rejecting the Conſolations of God, *is the beginning of Sorrows*, the firſt Payment of that ſad Arrear of mourning that ſhall be exacted in another World.

The Uſe ſhall be to excite us to thoſe Duties that are directly contrary to the Extreams forbidden, *viz.* To demean our ſelves under the Chaſtenings of the Lord with a deep Reverence and humble Fear of his Diſpleaſure, and with IV.

a firm Hope and Dependance upon him for a bleſſed Iſſue upon our complying with his holy Will.

1. With an humble Reverence of his Hand. This Temper is abſolutely neceſſary and moſt congruous with reſpect to God, upon the account of his Soveraignty, Juſtice and Goodneſs declar'd in his Chaſtenings; and with reſpect to our Frailty, our Dependance upon him, our Obnoxiouſneſs to his Law, and our Obligations to him, that he will pleaſe to afflict us for our good.

This is the reaſon of that Expoſtulation, *Will a Lion roar in the Foreſt, when he hath no Prey?* Shall God's Threatnings and Judgments have no Effect? *Who ever hardned himſelf againſt him, and proſpered? Do we provoke the Lord*

Amos 3. 4.

to

to *Jealousy*, the most sensible and severe Attribute when it is incens'd? *Are we stronger than he?* Can we encounter offended Omnipotency? Can we with an Army of Lusts oppose Myriads of mighty Angels? 'Tis not Courage, but such a prodigious degree of Folly and Fury, that one would think 'twere impossible a reasonable Creature were capable of it. Yet every Sinner unreformed by Afflictions is thus desperate: *He stretches out his Hand against God, and strengthens himself against the Almighty; he runneth upon him, even on his Neck, upon the thick Bosses of his Bucklers.* Such a furious Rebel was *Ahaz*, who *in the time of his Distress, did trespass more against the Lord*: *This is that King* Ahaz! But God hath most solemnly declared, that he will be victorious at last over the most fierce obdurate Enemies. *As I live, saith*

Job 15. 25, 26.

2 Chron. 28.

the Lord, every Knee shall bow to me. His Power is Infinite, and Anger puts an Edg upon his Power, and makes it more terrible. If our Subjection be not voluntary, it must be violent. 'Tis our Wisdom to prevent Acts of Vengeance by humble Submissions. The Duty of the Afflicted is excellently expreſt by *Elihu*: *Surely it is meet to be said to God, I have born Chastisements, I will not offend any more. That I know not, teach thou me: if I have done Iniquity, I will do so no more.*

Job 34. 31, 32.

Add further, upon another account Reverence is due to God's Chastenings: for when Love is the Motive that incites one to give us Counsel, tho it be mixt with Reproofs, and his Prudence is not great, yet a Respect is due to the Affection. Now God who is only wise, chastises Men from a desire

to

to make them better and happy; he intends primarily to refine, not to consume them by Afflictions: so that a serious regard to his Hand is the most just and necessary Duty of the Creature. Briefly, every Chastisement should leave deep and permanent Impressions upon us; the Sense of God's Displeasure should make our Hearts mournful and mollified, broken and contrite, that his Will may be done by us on Earth as it is in Heaven.

2. Let us always preserve an humble Dependance and firm Hope on God, for a blessed Issue out of all our Troubles: The Support and Tranquillity of the Soul ariseth from hence. Christian Patience suffers all things as well as Charity, being incouraged by a continual expectation of Good from him.

Patience

Patience confirms all other Graces, and is to the whole Armour of God, what the Temper is to material Weapons, that keeps them from breaking in the Combat. Now to maintain a constant Hope in Affliction, 'tis necessary to consider the Reason of the Exhortation as 'tis admirably amplified by the Apostle.

(1.) The Relation God sustains when he afflicts Believers. He is a Judg invested with the Quality of a Father. The Covenant of Grace between God and Jesus Christ, our true *David*, contains this observable Clause, *If thy Children forsake my Law, and walk not in my Judgments; If they break my Statutes, and keep not my Commandments; then will I visit their Transgressions with a Rod, and their Iniquity with Stripes.*

Psal. 89. 30, 31, 32.

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The Love that ariſeth from this Relation, tho it cannot hate, yet it may be diſpleaſed, and chaſtiſe them for their Follies. *Moſes* tells the *Iſraelites*, *Thou ſhalt conſider in thy Heart, that as a Man chaſtens his Son, ſo the Lord thy God chaſtens thee.* Deut. 8. 5. In Children Reaſon is not fully diſclouded, they are not capable to govern themſelves, and are only taught with ſenſible Pleaſure or Pain: So that a Father is obliged to join Correction with Inſtruction, to form them to Vertue. This is ſo far from being inconſiſtent with Paternal Affection, that 'tis inſeparable from it. For a Parent to ſuffer a Child to go on pleaſantly in Sin without due Puniſhment, is pure Cruelty diſguiſed under the Mask of Pity: for by the neglect of Diſcipline he is confirm'd in his vicious Courſes, and expoſed to Ruin. The Apoſtle therefore adds,

Whom

Whom the Lord loves, he chaſtens: As from the ſevereſt Wrath he ſometimes forbeareth to ſtrike, ſo from deareſt Love he afflicts. Humble Believers through a Cloud of Tears may ſee the Light of God's Countenance: for having elected them by ſpecial Love to a glorious Inheritance above, he diſpenſeth all things here in order to the preparing them for it; and all Temporal Evils, as Means, are transform'd into the Nature of the End to which they are ſubſervient. So that the ſharpeſt Sufferings are really from God's Favour, ſince they are beneficial for our obtaining real Happineſs. The Devil uſually tempts Men in a Paradiſe of Delights, to precipitate them into Hell: God tries them in the Furnace of Afflictions, to purify and prepare them for Heaven.

(2.) 'Tis

(2.) 'Tis a ſtrong Cordial againſt fainting, to conſider that by virtue of the Paternal Relation *he ſcourges every Son whom he receives*: for no Troubles are more afflictive and ſtinging than thoſe that are unexpected. Now when we are aſſured that there is no Son whom the Heavenly Father doth not chaſten, we are leſs ſurprized when we meet with Croſſes. Indeed there is hardly any kind of Affliction that may befal us, but we have ſome inſtance in Scripture of the Saints ſuffering the ſame. Are we poor and mean in the World? we ſhould conſider that Poverty with Holineſs is a Divine Complexion: Jeſus Chriſt the holy and beloved Son of God, had not where to lay his Head. Are we under bodily Diſtempers? good *Hezekiah* was ſtruck with an uncomfortable Diſeaſe

Diſeaſe as to the Quality of it; and *Gaius* had a flouriſhing Soul in a languiſhing Body. Are our dear Relations taken away? *Aaron* and *David* loſt ſome of their Sons by terrible Strokes. Are our Spirits wounded with the ſenſe of God's Diſpleaſure? *Job* and *Heman* were under ſtrong Terrors, yet the Favourites of Heaven. Briefly, how many moſt dear to God were called forth to extream and bloody Trials for Defence of the Truth? How many Deaths did they endure in one Torment? How many Torments in one Death? yet they were ſo far from fainting, that the more their Pains were exaſperated, the more their Courage and Joy was ſhining and conſpicuous; as the Face of the Heavens is never more ſerene and clear, than when the ſharpeſt North Wind blows. 'Tis the Apoſtle's Inference, *Seeing*

we are compaſſed with ſuch a Cloud of Witneſſes, let us run with Patience the Race that is ſet before us.

This is further enforc'd by the following words, *If ye be without* Ver. 8. *Chaſtening, whereof all are partakers, then are ye Baſtards, and not Sons.* If God doth not vouchſafe us the Mercy of his Rod, 'tis evident we are not part of his Fatherly Care. The Bramble is neglected, while the Vine is cut till it bleeds. 'Tis a miſerable Privilege to be exempted from Divine Diſcipline, and by Eaſe and Proſperity to be corrupted and made fit for Deſtruction. St. *Auſtin* repreſents one expoſtulating with God: *O Deus, iſta eſt Juſtitia tua, ut mali floreant, & boni laborent!* O God, it is righteous with Thee, that the Wicked ſhould proſper, and the Good ſuffer! *Dicis Deo, iſta eſt Juſtitia tua? & Deus tibi, iſta eſt Fides tua? hæc enim tibi promiſi?* In Pſal. 25.

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ad hoc Christianus factus es, ut in seculo isto floreres, & in inferno postea torquereris? God replies to him, Is this your Faith? Did I promise you Temporal Prosperity? Were you a Christian for this, that you might flourish in this World, and be miserably tormented in Hell?

Ver. 9. The Apostle represents the special Prerogative of God *as the Father of Spirits*, and so hath a nearer Claim to us than the Fathers of our Flesh, and that he is not liable to those Imperfections that attend the Earthly Relations. *They for a few days chastened us for their own Pleasure.* Human Love is a troubled irregular Passion, mixt with Ignorance, and prone to Error in the Excess or Defect. Sometimes Parents are indulgent, and by a cruel Compassion spare their Children when they are faulty: sometimes they correct without Cause,

Cauſe, ſometimes when the Reaſon is juſt, yet they err in the manner or meaſure of the Correction, ſo that their Children are diſcouraged. But in God there is a perfect Union of Wiſdom and Love, of Diſcretion and Tenderneſs; his Affection is without the leaſt Imperfection. His Will is always guided by infinite Wiſdom. If his Children offend, he will chaſtiſe them with the Rod of Men, that is, moderately: for as in Scripture things are magnified by the Epithet, Divine or of God, ſo they are leſſened by the Epithet, Human. Accordingly the Apoſtle declares to the *Corinthians*, that *no Temptation had befallen them, but ſuch as is common to Man: but God is faithful, who will not ſuffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the Temptation alſo make a way to eſcape, that ye may be able to*

2 Sam. 7. 14.

1 Cor. 10, 13.

bear it. As a prudent Physician consults the Strength of the Patient as well as the Quality of the Disease, and proportions his Medicine; so all the bitter Ingredients, their Mixture and Measure, are dispens'd by the wise Prescription of God, according to the degrees of Strength that are in his People.

The Apostle specifies the immediate End of God in his Chastenings: *But he for our Profit, that we may be partakers of his Holiness.* This is the supream Excellency of the Divine Nature, and our Conformity to it is so valuable, that it renders Afflictions not only tolerable, but so far desirable as they contribute to it. In the present State our Graces are imperfect, and our Conformity to the Divine Purity is like the Resemblance of the Sun in a watry Cloud, very much

much beneath the Perfection and Radiancy of that great Light. Now God is pleaſed to faſhion us according to his Image by Afflictions. As a Statue is cut by the Artificer, to bring it into a beautiful Form.

He is pleaſed to bring us into divers Temptations to try our Faith, to work in us Patience, to inflame our Prayers, to mortify our Carnal Deſires, to break thoſe voluntary Bonds whereby we are fettered to the Earth, that we may live with thoſe Affections wherewith others die. And certainly if we make a true Judgment of things, we have not the leaſt cauſe to ſuſpect the Love of God when he chaſtiſes us, to take away Sin the only abominable Object of his Hatred and deep Deteſtation, and to render us Partakers of the Divine Nature.

And the present peaceable Fruit of Righteousness is the Product in those who are duly exercised by their Troubles. It is an Allusion to the Reward of the Conquerors in the Olympick Games, who had a Crown of Olives, the Emblem and Shadow of Peace. But true Peace, a Divine Calm in the Conscience, shall be the Recompence of all that exercise their Graces sutable to an afflicted State. In short, the Apostle assures Believers, that they are *chastened of the Lord, to prevent their Condemnation with the World.* The correcting Rod delivers them from Hell. This Consideration changes Thorns into Roses, and extracts Honey out of Wormwood: if the way be stony or showery that leads to Blessedness, a Christian should willingly walk in it. To conclude; from the Consideration of what the

1 Cor. 11. 32.

the Scripture declares concerning Temporal Evils, let us *lift up the Hands that hang down, and the feeble Knees; and make ſtreight Paths for our Feet, leſt that which is lame be turned out of the Way; but let it rather be healed*: *i. e.* In our Affliction, let us take Courage and Reſolution from the Promiſes, and live in a holy Conformity to God's Will, that the weak or faint may be reſtored.

The firſt and laſt Leſſon of Pagan Philoſophy was to ſupport Men under the Storms to which they are liable in this open State, to render the Soul *velut Pelagi rupes immota*, as a Rock unſhaken by the Waves.

But all their Directions were unſucceſsful, and ſo could not ſecure them from Impatience or Deſpair.

Deſpair. But the Goſpel that aſſures us of the Love of God in ſending Afflictions for our Spiritual and Eternal Good, is alone able to compoſe the Mind. And whenever we faint in Troubles, 'tis either from Infidelity or Inconſideration; 'tis impoſſible a Perſon ſhould be a Chriſtian, and be incapable of Comfort in the moſt afflicted State: for we are really ſo by the holy Spirit, who is the Comforter. When we ſpeak ſometimes to thoſe we judg infirm, we ſpeak to Infidels, who only receive Remedy from Time which they ought to receive from Faith; they they have the Name of God only in their Mouths, but the World is in their Hearts. Their Paſſions are ſtrong and obſtinate, not ſubject to ſanctified Reaſon. The Difficulty they have of being comforted, diſcovers the neceſſity of their

their being afflicted. They need Converſion more than Conſolation; others, who are ſincere in Faith, yet are apt to faint under Troubles, from an Error like that of the Apoſtles; when their Lord came upon the Waters in a ſtormy tempeſtuous Night to their Aſſiſtance, they thought he was a Spirit. So they look on God as an Enemy, when he comes to ſanctify and ſave them: the Soveraign Remedy of our Sorrows is to correct the Judgment of Senſe by a ſerious Belief of God's Promiſe. Thus we ſhall reconcile the roughneſs of his Hand with the ſweetneſs of his Voice: he calls to us from Heaven in the darkeſt Night, *'Tis I, be not afraid.* He corrects us with the Heart and Hand of a Father.

A due Conſideration of theſe things will produce a glorified Joy in

in the midst of our Sufferings.

Rom. 15. 4. *Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our Learning, that we through Patience and Comfort of the Scriptures might have Hope.*

SER-

SERMON VI.

LUKE xiv. 23.

The Lord said to the Servant, Compel them to come in, that my House may be full.

OUR Blessed Saviour in the days of his Humility, among other Instances of his admirable Condescension, was pleased in his Sermons to stoop to the Capacity of the Hearers, and instruct them in a familiar easy way. The infirm Eye of Flesh cannot behold Spiritual Things in their immediate Purity and Glory, but as shadowed under sensible Comparisons. Therefore his excellent Goodness made use of Parables, to illustrate and explain by Represen-

tations and Patterns borrowed from things common and known, things of a ſublimer Nature, and more diſtant from our Apprehenſions: and by this ingaging lively manner to awaken the Spirit to conſider by what is ſaid, what is ſignified: and to inſinuate into the Affections Divine Truths ſo pleaſingly conveyed to us.

Now of all the Parables in the Goſpel, this of the Marriage-Feaſt, both in reſpect of the Excellence of the Matter, and the manner of Expreſſion ſutable to our Capacity, deſerves the ſerious Application of our Minds and Hearts. I will make ſome Obſervations upon it, that may be uſeful and introductive to the following Diſcourſe.

Two general Parts are to be conſidered, in it; *viz.*

I. The

I. The Narrative of the Preparations, and the Persons invited to the Feast.
II. The Success of the Invitation.

In unfolding these Generals, I shall consider the Substance of the Parable, without straining it by far-fetch'd Parallels beyond the Intention of our Saviour. 'Tis a curious Folly to turn every Figure in Scripture into an Allegory. The Parable is the same in Substance with that in the 22*d* Chapter of St. *Matthew*, from the 2*d* Verse to the 15*th*: that indeed has more of Circumstance and Magnificence in the Relation. The *certain Man that made the Feast is there stiled a King*, that is, the blessed God; *and the Feast is for the Marriage of his Son*: Under this Figure of a Royal Marriage is represented the Mystical

Marriage between Chriſt and his Church, and the Type is infinitely excell'd by the Reality. If we conſider the Perſons join'd in this Divine Alliance, the Son of God, of the ſame Nature, of equal and eternal Greatneſs with his Father, to unite himſelf to ſinful miſerable Creatures in a Conjugal Relation, the moſt tender and entire, What an immenſe diſtance was to be overcome? What a ſeeming Diſparagement was it to him? In order to this it was neceſſary there ſhould be a Conformity of Nature between us: he therefore *was made Fleſh, that we might be one Spirit with him*: he aſſumed our Nature in a Perſonal Union to the Diety, that he might marry our Perſons in a Spiritual Union. He was a Saviour to redeem us, that he might be a Husband to inrich us. Aſtoniſhing Love! The Lord of Glory, higher than the Heavens, ſtoop'd

ſo

ſo low as to eſpouſe poor Duſt: he gave his Life for us, and himſelf to us for ever. What Honour and Happineſs accrues to us by this Alliance! the Lord of Angels is our Husband. His Gifts are anſwerable to his Love: he is Heir of all things, and endows his Church with Heaven and Earth: the Apoſtle aſſures Believers all things *are yours, and you are Chriſt's, and Chriſt is God's.* Our Communion with him is ſo perfect, that he diſcharges us of all the Evils that we cannot bear, our Sins and the Curſe due to them, by taking them upon himſelf, and beſtows upon us all the Bleſſings and Bleſſedneſs we are capable to enjoy, *Wiſdom, Righteouſneſs, Sanctification and Redemption.*

By the great Supper prepar'd, we are to underſtand the Manifeſtation of the Meſſiah, with all the moſt precious and unvaluable Benefits purchaſed and conferr'd by him

upon Believers; the Pardon of Sins, Adoption into God's Family, the Graces and Comforts of the Spirit, and eternal Glory, the becoming Teſtimonies of his Greatneſs and Love.

The prime Gueſts invited to this Feaſt are the Jews, the ſelect People of God, *to whom pertained the*
Rom. 9. 4, 5. *Adoption, and the Glory, and the Covenants, and the giving of the Law, and the Service of God, and the Promiſes: Whoſe are the Fathers, and of whom concerning the Fleſh Chriſt came, who is over all, God bleſſed for ever.* When other Nations were excluded from the Alliance of God, his Preſence and Worſhip was their Privilege, and for them this Feaſt was principally intended.

The Servants employed in the Invitation were, firſt, *Moſes* and the Prophets, incluſively to *John*
Rom. 3. 2. the Baptiſt; all *to whom the Oracles of God were committed*, and by whom the

the eternal Counsels of his Wisdom were declar'd concerning the Messias. All their Prophecies, as so many Lines, meet in this Centre. The other Servants were the Apostles, who were commanded *to preach the Gospel first at* Jerusalem. The first order of Servants, and the second, both proposed the same Messias, as the Object of our Faith and Love; but the Prophets under Shadows and Figures in the Promises, the Apostles clearly in the Truth and Accomplishment. The first invited while the Preparations were making; but the Evangelical Ministers are more earnest and pressing, *Come, for all things are now ready.* And in comparing these two Periods of Time, there is the most shining and sensible Evidence of the Truth of the Christian Religion: for the Marks of it are clear in the Prophecies by their exact References to the Accomplish-

Deut. 18. Psal. 2. Isa. 40. Luke 24.

ment in the Person of Christ; and they are clear in the Accomplishment by the Correspondence to the Prophecies. Who can suspend Assent that our Redemption by Jesus Christ is the Work of Divine Providence, when the design of it is so exactly delineated in the Prophecy?

Thus the unchangeable Firmness and Stability of God's Counsel is the Foundation of our Faith. The Consummation of the Marriage will be at the second coming of Christ.

II. The Success of the Invitation is related, *They all with one Consent began to make Excuse. The first said, I have bought a piece of Ground, and I must needs go to see it: Another said, I have bought five Yoke of Oxen, and go to prove them*: And another said, *I have married a Wife, and I cannot come.* All the Carnal Affecti-

Luke 14. 18, 19, 20.

Affections are readily and presently conspiring in the refusal. It may seem that the Allegations of a Purchase and Marriage for not coming to a Feast were very reasonable: but the Feast represents Celestial Happiness, in comparison of which all the Profits and Pleasures of this World are but Loss and Dung: 'Tis evident then, their Excuses are strong Accusations of their Folly and Ingratitude: Of Folly in preferring Shadows before substantial Felicity, Moments before Eternity: Of Ingratitude, in rejecting contumeliously the most gracious and earnest Offer of such a Happiness. This is spoken of the Jews, who lived in the time of the Son of God's Descent for the Salvation of Men: The love of the World caused them to despise his mean Appearance, and neglect the Call of humble Mercy. Upon their refusal, *the Servant came and shewed* Ver. 21.

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his Lord these things; Then the Master of the House being Angry, said to his Servant, Go out quickly into the Streets and Lanes of the City, and bring in hither the Poor, and the Maimed, and the
Ver. 22. *Halt, and the Blind. And the Servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast com-*
Ver. 23. *manded, and yet there is Room. And the Lord said unto the Servant, Go out into the High-ways and Hedges, and compel them to come in, that my House*
Ver. 24. *may be filled. For I say unto you, that none of those Men that were bidden, shall taste of my Supper.*

The Refusers are for ever excluded from the Joy of this Royal Feast, being as unworthy as unwilling to partake of it. This Judgment is still visible upon the Nation of the Jews, who consent to their Progenitors rejecting and condemning the Messias, and will not be convinced of the obstinate Imposture that was devised to prevent the Belief of his Resurrection. But it did

did not become the Wisdom and Goodness of God, that such costly Preparations should be lost: it was requisite that some Persons should actually come to the Feast, that is, obey the Heavenly Call, and receive the Gospel; for otherwise the Redemption the Son of God so dearly acquir'd, had been without Fruit, he had died in vain, which is directly contrary to the Promise of God to him. *I will give thee for a Light to the Gentiles, that thou mayst be my Salvation to the ends of the Earth.* Accordingly the Servant is ordered to bring in the *Poor, the Lame, and the Blind, and to go into the High-ways and Hedges, and compel them to come in, that the House may be filled.* These Expressions declare the extream Misery of the Heathens, who were at that time *without Christ, Aliens from the Commonwealth of* Israel, *Strangers from the Covenants of Promise, having no Hope,* Isa. 4. 9, 6. Ephes. 2. 12.

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and without God in the World.

Compel them to come in. The Papists allege this Text to give colour to their Cruelty, in their violent ways of making Proselytes to their Idolatry. Their convincing Arguments are Swords, and Racks, and Gibbets, and Fires. If this be a proper Method of converting Men to Religion, the greatest Tyrants are the most infallible Teachers. The Vanity and Impiety of the Pretence will appear by considering,

1. 'Tis ridiculous to Reason, to use forcible Means for such an End: for the Understanding is a reasonable Faculty, and can only be convinc'd by instructing Reasons. It cannot judg of things but as they appear, nor assent against its Judgment. Indeed Threatnings and Tortures may make Men Infidels, but not sincere Believers: it may make them Hypocrites and Comedians in

in Religion, but not unfeigned Profeſſors. This is abundantly exemplified in *France*, where the vaſt number of ſervile Converts have been made by their Dragoons, not their Doctors.

2. This is moſt contrary to the Practice of our Saviour, and to the Spirit of the Goſpel. The Sword that Chriſt uſeth in ſubduing his Enemies, and making them willing Subjects to his Scepter, *goes out of his Mouth.* His Kingdom was introduced into the World by Preaching and Miracles, by doing Good and ſuffering Evil: he open'd the way for the Goſpel not by killing his Enemies, but by dying himſelf and in his Members: The eſtabliſhing and enlarging his Religion are by ſutable means, the Illumination of Mens Minds, the Perſwaſion of their Wills, the drawing of their Affections to embrace it. Accordingly the Apoſtle Rev. 19. 15.

tells

2 Cor. 10. 4, 5. tells us, *The Weapons of our Warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of ſtrong Holds; Caſting down Imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth it ſelf againſt the Knowledg of God, and bringing into Captivity every Thought to the Obedience of Chriſt.* The Weapons are ſutable to the Warfare, and the Warfare to the Kingdom, which is ſpiritual, *not of this World.* The uſing of Force to conſtrain Men to embrace the Chriſtian Religion, is contrary to the Love, the Goodneſs, Meekneſs, Clemency and Benignity, the bleſſed Temper the Goſpel plants in the Breaſts of Chriſtians. How ſeverely did our Saviour rebuke the fiery Spirit in *James* and *John? You know not what* Luke 9. 55. *manner of Spirit you are of; the Son of Man came not to deſtroy Mens Lives, but to ſave them.* 'Tis contrary to the Golden Rule given to all his Diſciples, *What you would*

have

have others do to you, do you to them.

But this must be acknowledged, that 'tis very congruous that the Papists make use of the material Sword, when *the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God,* strikes through the Heart of Popery. The Doctrine of the Mass is a clear Contradiction to the Scripture, and a notorious derogating from the Value and Virtue of Christ's Death: they say 'tis an unbloody Sacrifice of Christ, propitiatory for the Living and the Dead: Whereas our Saviour was offered up but once, the Mass is ten thousand times in a day repeated. Christ's Sacrifice was with Blood, and an unbloody Sacrifice is not propitiatory, nor can *obtain Remission.* Where can they find in Scripture the Religious Worship of the Saints? They set up an infinite number of Intercessors, and rob

rob our Saviour of his Glory, as if he were defective either in his Compassionate Love to us, for whom he mediates, or in his Power with God. They prefer his Mother before him in dispensing Mercy of which Sinners have the most need: they represent him as strict and severe, but she is composed of Sweetness, he is the Judg, she the Advocate and Saviour; we will leave them to the jealous God.

I shall only observe farther, that many erring Sects preserve their Allegiance to the Divine Authority in the Scripture, for they do not assume an Infallibility to themselves, but mistake the Sense of Scripture: but the Papists by asserting that the Authority of Scripture depends upon the Testimony of their Church, that is, the Sun borrows its Beams from her Eyes, and by arrogating an Infallibility to it, do in effect renounce Homage to the Authority of

of God in his Word. And from hence it is that the Adherers to that Religion are so inconvincible: tho Sense, Reason and Scripture discover their Doctrines to be plainly impossible. Their Doctrine of Transubstantiation involves such Contradictions as destroy the Essence and End of Miracles: Their Doctrine of the Pope's Supremacy implies there are two Monarchs of one Kingdom, two Heads of one Body, two Husbands of one Spouse. No Errors are more strong and fatal than such as are arm'd with Authority, especially if that Authority be esteem'd sacred. But to return from this Digression, tho not impertinent.

Compel them to come in. The word signifies the use of all constraining Motives, and the most earnest Intreaties that are congruous to prevail upon those who are invited to a Feast. The same word is used

Mat. 14. 22. *And Jesus constrained his Disciples to get into a Ship*; which certainly was not by violent driving or drawing them, but by his commanding Authority. So 'tis related of the two that were with our Saviour in the Journey to *Emmaus*,
Luke 24. 29. that they *constrained him to abide with them*: The Constraint was by earnest Intreaties, far from Force. The same word is used of *Peter's*
Gal. 2. 14. compelling the *Gentiles to live after the Rites of the Jews*: that was by his Example. Thus the Nations were compelled to receive the Gospel by the Apostles, the Ambassadors for Christ, who did ardently, *in season and out of season*, pray them in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God. Their Doctrine was recommended by the Holiness of their Lives, and confirmed by the Lustre of their Miracles. In short, the Expression signifies how pleasing it is to God, that those who are in-

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vited by the Offers of Grace in the Gospel, should come to Christ to obtain Life: and that the Invitation shall be effectual in the Hearts of those who belong to the Election of Grace.

The Proposition that I shall insist on is this:

'Tis the great Duty of the Ministers of Christ to use their best Endeavours, to instruct and perswade Men to embrace the saving Mercies of the Gospel.

The Commission was immediately given to the Apostles, but extends to the end of the World, till the Ministration of the Gospel shall cease. I will explicate the Doctrine in this order.

1. Consider what is implied, the Avetsness in Men from consenting

senting to the Terms of Salvation offered in the Gospel.

II. The Means by which they are wrought on, and induced to come to the Celestial Feast.

III. Prove that 'tis the great Duty of the Ministers of Christ to apply themselves with a holy Zeal to bring Men to partake of the saving Mercies revealed in the Gospel.

I. There is an Averseness implied in the Expression, *Compel them to come in.* This will be evident by considering, that the World, the Flesh, and Satan, are Enemies in Combination against the Souls of Men, and raise an Army of Objections against their submitting to the Terms of the Gospel.

1. The World is the general Temptation: the natural World, and the corrupt World, the Things and

and Men of the World hinder our coming to Christ.

1st. The natural World, comprising all the Creatures in it, was originally very good, both in respect of the Things themselves, and their designed Use: for they were beneficial to Man, in order to his serving and enjoying the blessed God. But since his Fall from the State of unstain'd Nature, they are accidentally evil to him. *The Creatures are made subject to Vanity, not willingly*: they are perverted from their innocent use, to foment and gratify Mens vicious Appetites. Therefore the Apostle declares, *the whole Creation groans and travels in Pain, is in a kind of Agony ready to faint, not for the Labour, but the Indignities they suffer.* The Charge that God fastens upon Idolaters, is true against Worldly Men: *Ye have taken my Silver, and my Gold, and have carried into your Temples my goodly* Rom. 8.

pleasant things. The Riches, the Pleasures, the Greatness and Glory of the World are the Idols of their Heads and Hearts. The Interposition of the Earth darkens their Minds, eclipses their Esteem of the Fruition of God as their only Happiness; the Love of it alienates and estranges their Affections from him, their Trust in it slackens their due Dependance upon him. From hence it is, that the World, which, made by God, was a fair and bright Theatre of his Perfections, to raise the Thoughts and Affections of Men with Delight and Wonder to the blessed Creator, as 'tis manag'd by Satan, and abus'd by the Lusts of Men, *is the Shadow of Death:* such as some Trees cast, that not only intercept the refreshing Light of the Sun, but shed a malignant contagious Influence. Strange Alteration!

The World is present and sensible, and makes an easy entrance into

into the Bosoms of Men. Their Souls are surpriz'd and deceived by the Suggestions of the Senses, that represent earthly things as great Realities: spiritual and future things are to them but matters of Fancy and Conceit. The present and succeeding World are like Counterballances; as the one rises, the other sinks in Mens Opinions. When the World has got Possession of them, it commands and captivates all their Powers and Faculties. All the Preaching in the World is in vain, a Throng of Business or loose Diversions causes the neglect of the great Salvation. Represent to them the attractive Mercies of God, his melting Bowels open'd in the Gospel to all repenting Sinners; they are unmoved, frozen in their Dregs. Remember them, that their Bodies are dying every day, and their Souls are already dead, and that without sincere coming to Christ they can-

not be recovered to the Life of Grace and Glory, 'tis in vain: tell them, they must shortly appear before the dread Lord of Spirits, and be accountable for all things done in this World, and the Consequence will be eternal; all is in vain: they have other Affairs, other Desires, which they regard and pursue; they are lost in the Labyrinth of the World, and have no Time nor Inclination to secure their main Interest.

'Tis further observable, from the Excuses alleged in the Parable of a Purchase, and a Marriage, and as 'tis said in *Mat.* 22. *That the Invited made light of it, one went to his Farm, and another to his Merchandise*; that those Temptations of the World are most perswasive and fatal to Men, that seem to be very natural and innocent. For what Duty is more clearly natural and reasonable than to make Provision of Supplies suta-

ble

ble to their Condition and State, to their Charge and Families? 'Tis true, Conſcience and Prudence require that Men ſhould be diligent in their Callings, for the Support and Comfort of the preſent Life. *But the Kingdom of Heaven, and the Righteouſneſs that leads to it, muſt be ſought in the firſt place.* The brighteſt Valuations, the moſt inflam'd Affections, the moſt vigorous and conſtant Endeavours are due to Heaven. Now the Minds and Faculties of Men are limited, and cannot with intenſe and equal Ardency apply themſelves to various Objects. If the World be the main Object of their Care and Counſel, the Vigor of their leading and inſtrumental Faculties will be leſs free and active for Heaven: And from hence it is, that the Affairs and Engagements of this World, tho immediately they do not deprive Men of Heaven, yet medi-

mediately they are destructive to them; for they lessen their Esteem, cool their Affections, slack their Endeavours to obtain it: they oppress their Spirits, ingross their Time, that they have no leisure to *work out their own Salvation:* They make them receptive of many Temptations, which wound their Souls to Death for ever. The constant Spring of the Sins and Misery of Men is from hence, they have forgot the regular use of the Creatures, as Means and Motives of their ascending to God; they understand not the Rule of Wisdom, to make Temporal Things subordinate to Eternal; they have lost the happy Temper of not totally declining the World, nor of eager embracing it. In short, they would enjoy the World, and only use God in their Exigencies. 'Tis therefore inculcated in Scripture, *That the Friends of the World are the Enemies*

of

of God, and that the Love of the World is inconsistent with the Love of the Father. 'Tis a most dangerous Sin, being so hardly discernable, and hardly cur'd: for the more appearance there is of Reason and the less of Sensuality in a Sin, the more it insinuates and prevails. We usually judg of Sins by the Foulness of the external Act, but the Guilt of it principally arises from its inward Contrariety to God. The Love of the World dethrones God in the Hearts of Men: other Sins dishonour him in breaking his Laws, this reproaches him as less worthy of our Respects. When it has free Dominion, it will as certainly, tho silently, destroy the Souls of those who are of a fair Reputation in the Eyes of Men, as the Riots of notorious Sinners will be their Ruine.

2*dly.* The corrupt World, those who are stiled the *Children of this World,*

World, by their Example, and by their Oppoſition, are Obſtacles in the way to Heaven.

(1.) By Example: for the broad Way is beaten by the Multitude, and few ſtrive *to enter in at the ſtrait Gate that leads to Eternal Life.* Now Men eaſily receive the Impreſſion of Example. Of this there is palpable Evidence; for when Sins are common, the numbers of the Guilty diminiſh the Senſe and Shame of the Guilt. But if Conſcience be ſometimes unquiet, they ſmother the Sparks of Conviction in their Breaſts, and make a reſolute Reckoning they ſhall be in no worſe condition than others. Miſerable Comfort! as if one tortur'd on a Rack could receive any Mitigation of his Pains, by the ſight of many others ſuffering the ſame Torture. So contagious are the Faſhions and Manners of the World, that a principal end of our Saviour's

Death

Death was to *deliver us from this present evil World*: that is, not from the Place, but from the depraved State, and sinful Practices of the Men of the World. The Apostle *Peter* remembers Believers, *Ye know that ye are not redeemed with corruptible things, as Silver and Gold, from your vain Conversation, received by Tradition from your Fathers; but with the precious Blood of Christ as of a Lamb without Blemish and without Spot.* So deep was the Pollution, it could only be wash'd out in that precious Fountain. The Principles and Ways of the World have a mighty Influence to blind and harden Men in Conformity to them. The Heathen Idolatries and Impurities were continued so long in the World, being commended and establish'd by publick Custom: and accordingly the Apostle tells the Ephesians, *they in time past walked according to the course of the World.*

Gal. 1.

1 Pet. 1.

Now

Now to apply this more closely to the present Subject: 'tis visible by the Conversation of Men in the World, that their Aims, their Appetites, their Endeavours are terminated in the World: their Souls cleave to it, the Train and Tendency of their Actions leads to it. A superficial Tincture of Religion, a Complemental Visit to God sometimes in publick Worship, contents the most; but their Thoughts, their Time and Strength are spent to obtain and enjoy the present World; for 'tis esteem'd their main Interest, and Heaven is only sought by the by, as an Accession to their Felicity. Now we usually approve and affect things according to common Opinions and Practice, tho unreasonable and exorbitant. The Psalmist speaking of the gathering uncertain Riches, observes, *this their way is their Folly, yet their Posterity approve their Sayings*: they imitate the Folly

Psal. 49.

of

of their Progenitors, tho fatal to them. Men are vain in their Minds, and ſecure in their Sins, by Conformity to the numerous Examples that encompaſs them. Nay, a regenerate Man by converſing with the unregenerate World, is in danger to be tainted in his Judgment, and to be irregular in his Affections to Earthly Things: he is apt to conceive ſo highly, and to frame ſuch glorious and goodly Ideas of Worldly Excellencies, that his Deſires are inflam'd to attain them, and proportionably he is chill'd and controul'd in the Alacrity and Vigor of his Endeavours after heavenly things. Thus as a freſh-Water River by its nearneſs to the Sea has a brackiſh Taſte; ſo even the Citizens of Heaven are prone to be Earthly-minded, by their Society with the Children of this World. 'Tis the wiſe and earneſt Advice of the Apoſtle, *Be not conformed to this*

this World, but be ye transform'd by the renewing of your Minds, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect Will of God. The Corruption of the World has deeply seiz'd upon us since to purge it away; a Man must be melted anew and transform'd into another Creature. So difficult it is for a Carnal Man to resist the united Force and potent Sway of corrupt Nature and Custom.

(2.) By opposing those who sincerely comply with the Heavenly Call, either by Scorn and Derision, or Violence and Persecution. Human Nature is very sensible of disparaging Reflections, and 'tis one of the spiteful Arts of Satan to make use of his Instruments to deride serious Religion out of the World. 'Tis equally profane and pernicious to turn into Raillery and wild Mirth the Impieties and Impurities of the Wicked, and the Holiness that

that shines in the Lives of excellent Saints: for the *making a Mock of Sin*, takes away the just Horrour and Detestation of it; and the scurrilous vilifying of Holiness, takes away the Veneration and high Respect that is due to it. Carnal Men who live in Pleasures, without restraint of their licentious Appetites, upbraided by the holy and heavenly Conservation of sincere Christians, cannot with Patience suffer others to practise what they neglect; and to countenance their own Looseness, and from Revenge, scurrilously abuse whom they will not imitate. *Pure and undefiled Religion* is the Game that winged Wits fly at. He that avoids the appearance and approach of Sin, that *strives to be holy as God is holy in all manner of Conversation*, is the Mark wherein their poison'd Arrows are fasten'd. *The just upright Man is laughed to scorn.* Nay, even Job 12. 4.

dull Wretches will ſet up for Wits, and attempt by their inſipid Jeſts, and thredbare Fooleries to abuſe the Saints. But all the bitter Sarcaſms that are darted upon Religion, are infinitely more hurtful to the Deſpiſers than the Deſpiſed. It argues a prodigious Depravation of Mind in thoſe who take a perverſe delight in ſcorning Holineſs, the glorious Likeneſs of God in Man: ſuch in the account of Scripture are the worſt Sinners, the moſt forlorn Wretches, whoſe Condition is dreadful, if not deſperate.

This ſcornful expoſing Religion to make Men aſham'd of it, is moſt ſucceſsful upon the Diſpoſitions of young Perſons, and thoſe who are of higher Birth and Rank in the World. Youth is the bluſhing Age, and has a Tenderneſs of Face, that cannot bear the Prints of Diſgrace. If one in his early Age begins to breath the Life of Holineſs, if he

he abſtains from fleſhly Luſts that war againſt the Soul, he is repreſented as fondly nice, and ridiculouſly ſcrupulous: no leſs than the ſpecial Grace of of God is neceſſary to fortify his holy Reſolutions, and make him ſuperior to the Scorns of the Wicked.

The Honourable are fearful of Diſgrace, and more tender of their Reputation, than others, being in a greater Light, and expos'd to more Eyes and Obſervations. If one of noble Quality renounces the Vanities and Enticements of the World, *makes the Fear of the Lord his Treaſure*; if he zealouſly endeavours to be more diſtinguiſh'd from others by his eminent Vertues, than by the Splendor of his Condition, he is ſcornfully traduc'd as a melancholy Fop, as a low Spirit: as if Conſtancy in Devotion, and the Practice of Mortification were a deſcent from his Dignity, and caſt a

dark ſad Shade upon his Honour. Thus the vain perverted World vilifies that Holineſs in Men, which
Iſa. 6. the bleſſed Angels adore in God.

But alas, how many that had ſerious Inclinations to be religious, and were entred into the way of Life, have been cool'd and check'd in their firſt Fervors: they could not firmly ſuſtain Reproach, and endure Conflicts with the Paſſion of Shame, therefore return'd to the Courſe of the World, and with it have periſh'd to Eternity. We read
Deut 25. 17, 18, 19. of the *Iſraelites* after their coming out of *Egypt*, they met in the way with *Amalec*, who *feared not God, and ſmote the feeble, and faint, and weary of them*: Therefore the Lord ſtrictly charged them to blot *out the Memory of* Amalec *from under Heaven.* In this Type, profane Scorners, that diſcourage Beginners in Religion, may ſee their Doom.

To

To conclude this first General, I shall observe, the Parable represents to us, that those who were first invited, *not only made light of it, but entreated spitefully the Servants, and slew them.* Their neglect of the gracious Invitation, was like the Sleep of one oppress't with the Fumes of Wine, that does not hear a Message sent to him: their cruel Rage against those who invited them, was like the awaking of a distracted Person, who hearing the Voice that calls him, and by an Error of Judgment mistaking what is said, in fury snatches his Sword, and destroys those about him. Wicked Men are of Satan's Society: he *was a Murderer from the beginning*, and hates the Word of Life. As soon as our Saviour was born, and pointed out by a new Star in Heaven, there was a design to destroy him. 'Tis true, the subtile Tempter does not at first in-

Mat. 22.

ſpire Men with Rage againſt the Goſpel: but as in the Art of dying, ſome Colours are preparatory for others, the Cloth is firſt dipt in Blew before it takes a Black; ſo by ſeveral degrees in ſinning he brings them to extream Wickedneſs. Thus the Neglect of the Goſpel makes way for the Contempt of thoſe who bring it; and Contempt proceeds to Hatred, and Hatred ſometimes produces miſchievous and deadly Effects. Now the fear of Temporal Evils, eſpecially if extream, to which Men are open and obnoxious for the Goſpel, will hinder them from embracing it, or cauſe them to forſake it, if they are not ſupernaturally enlightned and confirm'd, by *the Spirit of Power and Love, and of a ſound Mind.*

2 Tim. 1.

SER-

SERMON VII.

LUKE xiv. 23.

The Lord said to the Servant, Compel them to come in, that my House may be full.

I Proceed to the second Hinderance of Mens rejecting the Call of the Gospel. *The Flesh*, that in the Language of the Scripture signifies the corrupt Nature, and inbred Inclinations of Men to forbidden things, obstruct their coming to Christ. The corrupt Nature is called *Flesh*, not only as that is a term of vilifying, for the Original and Resolution of Flesh is into the Dust, but partly with respect to its Propagation, and chiefly in that the usual attractive and de-

filing Objects of Mens Thoughts and Desires are carnal, and are enjoyed by the carnal Faculties. Our Minds and Affections are coloured and qualified, distinguish'd and denominated from the Objects about which they are conversant. This Corruption is spread through all the Faculties of the Soul: the Mind is carnal in its Principles and Acts, *in opposition to the Spirit of the Mind renewed by Grace*: the Will and Affections are depraved. *Whatever is born of the Flesh is Flesh.* The Apostle fully expresses this Corruption: he saith, *the natural Man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God*; that implies the stubborn Averseness in the Will and Affections from spiritual things: *for they are Foolishness to him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.* The natural Mind is indispos'd and incapable of knowing supernatural things in their

1 Cor. 2. 14.

their Reality and Goodneſs, ſo as to raviſh the Will into a Compliance, till 'tis purified and ſpiritualiz'd by the holy Spirit. The ſame Apoſtle tells us, that *the Carnal Mind is Enmity againſt God, for it is not ſubject to the Law, neither can be.* As the Luſts of the Fleſh are oppoſite to the Law of God, ſo the Wiſdom of the Fleſh is to the Goſpel. Rom. 5.

This corrupt Nature makes the World ſuch a dangerous Snare to Men: for it blinds their Minds ſo as not to ſee the Droſs of Earthly Things, and the Glory of Heavenly. St. *John* expreſſes the tempting Objects of the World by the vicious Affections that are drawn out and faſtn'd upon them. *All that is in the World is the Luſt of the Fleſh, the Luſt of the Eyes, and the Pride of Life*; for the Luſts of Men put a Gloſs upon them, and make them pernicious. The Poiſon is not

not in the Flowers but in the Spider, that turns the Extraction from them into its own Nouriſhment. Accordingly St. *Peter* ſpeaks of the
2 Pet. 1. *Corruption in the World through Luſt.* The vain Heart is more deceitful than the vain World: for not only Reaſon that inſtructs the Wiſe, but Experience that inſtructs Fools, affords ſufficient Conviction, that all things here below *are Vanity and Vexation*: there is none ſo low, none ſo exalted in the World, but finds it ſo. By taſting a ſprig of Wormwood, the Bitterneſs is perceived as truly as by drinking a ſtrong Infuſion of it. The World with all its Varieties is a multiplied and perpetuated Vanity; it affords no ſolid Satisfaction: the ſetting down a thouſand Cyphers makes no Sum. But the carnal Heart is ſo enchanted with the falſe Luſtre and ſeeming Pleaſures of the World, that by changing one Vanity for another,

another, it seeks and expects Satisfaction. This verifies the Observation of the wise Preacher, *The Heart of the Sons of Men is full of Evil, and Madness is in their Hearts while they live, and after that they go down to the Dead.* Eccles. 9. 3. What a prodigy of Madness is it for Men to catch at a shadow of Happiness, to seek for that which they are uncertain to find; and if they do find, they are certain to lose; and to neglect substantial Felicity, which if they sincerely seek, they shall obtain, and if they obtain, they shall enjoy for ever!

But that it may be more evident *that the Flesh with its Affections and Lusts*, does powerfully interpose to hinder Men from embracing the Gospel, I will particularly consider its Opposition to the supernatural Doctrines revealed in the Gospel, the Objects of Faith; to the holy Precepts of it, the Rule of Obedience; to the spiritual Rewards recommend-

commended to our Choice.

1. The great Myſtery of Godlineſs, is the Incarnate Son of God, who by an ignominious and accurſed Death purchaſed a glorious bleſſed Life for his People: this Doctrine is accounted Fooliſhneſs, and rejected by the proud unrenewed Mind. The Goſpel is *ſtiled the Word of Faith*: 'tis conveyed to the Soul with Authority and Efficacy by Faith. As Faith in Chriſt was required of the Sick, and Blind, and Lame, that his healing Vertue might reſt on them; ſo the belief of the Divinity of his Perſon and Doctrine, is the firſt vital Qualification that makes us capable of ſpiritual healing. Infidelity ſtops the Fountain of Grace.

1 Cor. 1.

Rom. 10. 8.

Mat. 9. 28.

The Apoſtle ſaith, the *Word preach'd did not profit them that heard it, not being mixt with Faith.* Now altho the Light of the Goſpel be ſo clear and convincing that the ſincere

ſincere conſidering Mind cannot ſuſpend its Aſſent to it, yet the carnal Mind ſtain'd with Prejudices and vicious Affections, will not admit it. *An evil Heart is the principal cauſe of Unbelief.*

The Jews from Pride, Vain-Glory, and the Love of the World, rejected the Son of God, tho all the Characters of the Meſſias were conſpicuous in him: he did not come with viſible Glory and Obſervation, according to their Expectations and Deſires; they *ſaw no Form nor Comelineſs in him, and did not believe the Report concerning him*; they were ſcandaliz'd at his Parentage and mean Condition: he diſcovered their beloved Sins, and ſharply reproved the reigning Vices among them, which made his Perſon and his Preaching ſo odious to them.

Our Saviour tells us, *that Light was come into the World; and Men love Dark-*

Darkneſs rather than Light, becauſe their Deeds are evil. The Prejudice of their Paſſions was ſo ſtrong, that they rejected the ſaving Truths of the Goſpel, and believed damnable Deluſions.

Now the ſame Roots of Offence are in the Hearts of Men againſt the Goſpel. Such a Cloud ariſes from the Steam of carnal Luſts darkning the Underſtanding, that it cannot diſcover Truths ſo high as the myſterious Doctrines of Chriſt. Love in the Heart is requiſite as well as Light in the Mind, to know ſpiritual things: Obedience to the Will of God is the beſt Preparative to believe his Word. Our Saviour juſtly tax'd the Phariſees, *they did not repent, that they might believe.* Men are averſe from receiving thoſe Doctrines that condemn their Luſts; and are Infidels that they may be freely wicked, that the Shadow of Repentance may not diſturb them.

'Tis

'Tis said of Atheistical Scorners, *they are willingly ignorant*: The corrupt Will rules imperiously, and turns the Thoughts from those Arguments, which if duly considered, Reason with a strong hand would constrain them to acknowledg there is a righteous God who has Authority to command, and Power to punish those who rebel against his Laws. 2 Pet. 3. 5.

'Tis true, they pretend to offer something for a more colourable Denial of supernatural Revelation: but the perverseness of Infidelity appears through all their Pretences. Some object against the Sublimity of the Doctrines of the Gospel. It was the scornful Expression of one, This is like the *Peace of God that passes all Understanding*. As if the Reality of things depended upon the Conception and Capacity of the Human Mind, and Divine Truths were impossible because incomprehensible.

henſible. Such fooliſh Pride obſtructs the Reception of Divine Truths; and from hence humble Chriſtians are deſpiſed as led by a blind Belief. Others are offended at the ſimplicity of the revealing them. The Doctrines are ſo high they cannot reach unto, the manner of conveying them is ſo low they will not ſtoop to. But 'tis evident theſe arguings are not from the Reaſon but the Luſts of Men. For the rare Accord of the Matter and Manner of the Goſpel-Revelation is a ſenſible Character of its Deſcent from God: The Doctrine is high and bright, of an extraordinary Revelation; the Delivery of it is eaſy and familiar, ſince 'tis for the Inſtruction and Salvation of Men; and accordingly the Divine Wiſdom has made an exact Temperament of theſe things. Briefly, the corrupt Affections pervert the Will to reject the Goſpel, and the perverted

perverted Will influences the Understanding to disapprove it. Nay, carnal Lusts force Men against their Light, (as the Jews did *Pilate* to condemn the Person of Christ) to condemn his Doctrine.

There are many in this degenerate Age, who altho they dare not publickly own the defil'd and abhorr'd Name of Infidels, yet among their Companions employ their Wit to dispute and deride the most sublime and sacred Truths out of the World. Their Faces are full of Death, the Tokens of Reprobation are visible upon them. The Issue will discover them to be the wretched Examples of that fearful Rule. Those who are destin'd to final Ruin are infatuated.

Others are Believers in Profession and their own Conceit, but Infidels in Practice. Their Faith is but a vain Opinion, a loose Assent to the Christian Doctrine, because

'tis the Religion of the Country, but with our Radication and Eſtabliſhment. This is evident, conſidering that the Doctrines of the Goſpel are not meerly intellectual, the Objects of Theory and Speculation, but moral and practical, the Objects of our choice and ſeeking: *This is a faithful ſaying, and worthy of all Acceptation, that Jeſus Chriſt is come into the World to ſave Sinners.* Accordingly the unfeigned belief of them is ſeated not only in the Mind, but in the Heart, and is correſpondent to the infallible Truth and tranſcendent Goodneſs of the thing revealed: they make ſuch an Impreſſion on the Soul, that the value of them is above Life, and whatever comes in Competition is with deſpiſing Diſdain rejected. But when Men ſeldom remember and little regard eternal Things, how ſpecious ſoever the Profeſſion is, can there be a reaſonable Belief of

of their Words againſt their Works? Therefore in the Language of the Scripture, *all that do not firſt ſeek the Kingdom of Heaven, and the Righteouſneſs thereof*, are Unbelievers; it being morally impoſſible that Men ſhould ſincerely believe, and have a due Apprehenſion of it, but it muſt be the great Deſign of their Souls, and the main Buſineſs of their Lives to obtain it.

2. Security is the conſtant Effect of Infidelity, and hardens Men in their Sins, and the neglect of Salvation ſo dearly purchas'd, and graciouſly offered to them in the Goſpel. Direct Infidels ſet *their Mouth againſt Heaven*, and defy the Furnace of Hell. They are blindly bold, and fearleſs of that Judgment that makes the Devils tremble. Others, tho not open and palpable Infidels, are in a dead Calm, not ſenſible of their Sins, and have ſlight Apprehenſions of their great

Danger: Infidelity lies at the bottom of their Security. As the *Egyptians* in the thick Darkness that covered the Land, *moved not from their Places*; so many in ignorant Darkness, sit down and are at rest, careless of the Saviour that *can deliver from the Wrath to come.* Only those who have strong Apprehensions of Evils imminent and destructive, will fly to Christ as a Sanctuary and Shelter, and submit to his Terms of saving them.

Secondly; The Corrupt Nature will not submit to the Sanctity and Purity of the Gospel. The forecited Scripture tells us, the *Carnal Mind is Enmity against God*: and that Enmity is arm'd with many strong Lusts opposing his Law. The principal Cause of rejecting the Gospel is common to all, *We will not have this Man to reign over us.* 'Tis observable,

Luke 19. 14.

ſervable, that as Holineſs is that Attribute wherein God doth moſt excel, and Men are moſt defective; ſo the corrupt Will is moſt oppoſite to it. The Juſtice and Power of God in ſome caſes Men do approve and apply themſelves to: if injuriouſly accuſed or oppreſt, they deſire his Juſtice to vindicate their Innocence, and revenge their Wrongs: if in Diſtreſs and Exigencies, they pray that his powerful Providence may regard and relieve them: but they are extreamly averſe from his Holineſs ſhining in his Laws, which excites his Juſtice and Power to puniſh thoſe who rebel againſt it. They are ready to ſay to Chriſt, what the rebellious *Iſraelites* ſaid to *Rehoboham*, *Thy Father made our Yoke grievous: now therefore make thou the grievous Service of thy Father, and his heavy Yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will ſerve thee.* They will

1 Kings 12. 4.

measure out the scantling of their Obedience, how far he shall rule, and farther they will not yield. But our Saviour declares, *I am not*
Mat. 5. *come to destroy the Law, but to fulfil it.* 'Tis true, the Gospel is a Covenant of Grace, a soveraign Composition of precious Promises of recovering Grace, and pardoning Mercy; but 'tis also a Law, and *enjoins Repentance towards God, and Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.* As without Compensation to the Justice, so without Conformity to the Holiness of God, we can never be restored to his Favour, and enjoy him as our Felicity.

Our Saviour prescribes this indispensable Rule to his Disciples, *If any Man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross and follow me.* This is a comprehensive Fundamental Duty, and the natural Man has a strong Reluctancy to every part of it.

1. Self-

1. Self-dependance upon our own Vertues and Duties for the obtaining the Favour of God, and the Eternal Reward, is very natural to Men: it was the Condition of the first Covenant, to which they cleave. Men of a fair Conversation, and unblemish'd in the Eyes of the World, have some Sparks of the Pharisee in them, *who justified himself, that he was no Extortioner, nor Unjust, nor an Adulterer, nor as the profane Publican; and that he fasted and paid Tithes.* Upon such Reasons many presume of the Goodness and Safety of their Spiritual State: they take Pride and Content in themselves, in their Moral Goodness, and do not feel the want of a Saviour, nor apply themselves with humble mournful Affections to him for Reconciliation to God. Others think by the Worthiness of their Works to compensate for the Unworthiness of their Sins, to com-

mute one Duty for another, and ballance their Accounts with Heaven, not considering that if their Works were perfectly good, they are but the Performance of their Duty, if they had never sinn'd. It was one great Obstruction that hinder'd the Jews from receiving
Rom. 10. 3. the Gospel: *They being ignorant of God's Righteousness, and going about to establish their own Righteousness, did not submit themselves to the Righteousness of God.* One of a high Spirit will rather wear a mean Garment of his own, than a rich Livery, the Mark of Servile Dependance. Pride resists Grace, and Grace resists Pride. The Law of Faith requires us to renounce not only our Unrighteousness, but our Righteousness, even the most excellent Graces and the Fruits of them, in comparison of Christ, and as a Foundation of obtaining the Pardon of Sin, and Salvation for ever. Our

Righte-

Righteousness is defective and defiled, and cannot endure the trial of God's inlightning Tribunal. All our Doings and Sufferings cannot expiate the least Sin; we must only rely upon the Lord our Righteousness, to reconcile us to God, and that we may stand in Judgment. *He was made Sin for us, who knew no Sin, that we might be made the Righteousness of God in him*, not in our selves. 2 Cor. 5. 21.

How hard it is to awaken Men out of the Pharisaical Dream of their own Righteousness, is evident both in the Doctrine and Practice of those of the Roman Communion. They assert the formal Cause of our Justification in the sight of God is our inherent Holiness: they blaspheme the imputed Righteousness of Christ as a fantastick Apprehension: they declare that good Works have the merit of Congruity and Condignity to eternal Luke 16.

nal Life: and that by Penance, Satisfaction is paid to God for their Sins, as if there were a Proportion between the one and the other. They ſucceed the Phariſees in their proud and ſtubborn Reſiſtance of the Goſpel. And among other carnal Motives that faſten Men in that corrupt Religion, theſe have a ſpecial force, as quieting Conſcience, and gratifying their Luſts, that they can make Compenſation for their Offences againſt God, and that the Abſolution of a Prieſt ſeals their Pardon: thus being clear, they may begin a new Score, and return to their old Luſts with new Affections.

2. As Self implies the Fleſh with its Affections and Luſts, ſo Self-denial and Sin-denial are of the ſame extent. The whole Body of Corruption with all the parts of it, even the deareſt, the moſt tender and moſt cheriſh'd by carnal Men, muſt

must be mortified. Severe Restraints are laid upon the desiring and the angry Appetites, the Springs of all the Sins and Miseries in the World. We are strictly commanded to pluck *out the right Eye*, Mat. 5. *and to cut off the right Hand*, upon the most fearful Penalties, the Mark 9. suffering Torments insupportable and everlasting. The Gospel has the Perfections of a Rule, 'tis clear and compleat in the Direction of our Duty. *It teaches us to deny all* Tit. 2. *Ungodliness, and Worldly Lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this World.* Now carnal Men are apt to say with the *Capernaites*, *This is an hard saying.* Every one John 6. has a peculiar Favourite Lust, the 64. Sin of his Complexion, or of the Country wherein he lives, which if you pluck out of their Bosoms, they will fly in your Face. Men willingly enough hear Reproofs against Sins to which they are disinclin'd;

inclin'd; but if directed against their own Sins, whether of Pleasure or Profit, they will scorn the Reproof, and storm at the Reprover. They will perform some Duties that are consistent with their Carnal Ease and Interest, but obstinately stick at others. *Herod* is a notorious Instance of this: 'tis related *he heard* John *Baptist gladly, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things*: but his incestuous Affection made him prefer a filthy Harlot before the pure Law of God.

Mark 6. 20.

One indulged Lust captivates the Soul, and keeps it under the Power of Satan. If one Leg of a Bird be catch'd in the Net, 'tis as surely held as if its whole Body were entangled. One Lust separates from Christ, and is a Bar against our entrance into Heaven, for Christ is the only way to it. The Word of God is *sharper than a two-edg'd*

edg'd Sword; but carnal Men will interpose their Souls between their tender Lusts and the Word, and receive its deadly Strokes to spare them. The Lord Christ tells the Jews, *Ye will not come to me that ye may have Life*: They would readily embrace a Saviour that would allow the Pleasures of Sin, and free them from the Punishment; but their Wills were so strongly engaged, they would suffer no Divorce from their beloved Lusts: they chose Hell with Sin, rather than Heaven with Holiness. John 5.

3. The denial of Self includes all that in the order of Nature belongs to us: Life, and all the Supports, the Comforts, the Ornaments and Endearments of it; the sweetest Relations, Father and Mother, Brother and Sister, Wife and Children, the richest Possessions, Houses and Land, must be always parted with, in the Preparations of our Heart,

Heart, and Resolutions of our Wills, and actually, rather than desert our Duty. Such a Supremacy of Affection is required by our Saviour, that suspends the Operation of our Love upon all inferior things, when they are in Competition with his Interest and Glory. This Command binds all without exemption: therefore he directs his Followers to be arm'd with Expectation of hard Entertainment in the World. Now this Precept seems so severe to carnal Men, that no Motives can reconcile their Affections to it. If they are spoiled of the Advantages, and deprived of the Pleasures of this World, they are ready to complain as *Micah* to them who robb'd him of his Image and *Teraphim*, *You take away my Gods.* As if the Son of God were such a poor or illiberal Rewarder, either defective in Power or Love, that they should be Losers for his sake.

Thirdly;

Thirdly; The promiſed Rewards of the Goſpel have no affective Force upon the Carnal Mind, and Affections. 'Tis true, the Goſpel has open'd Heaven, and *brought Life and Immortality to light*; a State of entire endleſs Joy in the Preſence of God. Is it poſſible that Men ſhould be indifferent and careleſs of their final Happineſs? 'Tis almoſt equally difficult to induce Men to believe and chuſe the Favour and Fruition of God as their only Felicity, as to convince them they do not believe and chooſe it. But their Actions declare their Choice, and their Choice declares their Eſteem: for if his Favour were eſteem'd an unvaluable Treaſure, it would be the chief Object of their Deſires; they would not forfeit it for all the World: 'tis therefore evident that the chuſing the Pleaſures of Sin, and the Profits of the World, is the direct deſpiſing the Favour of God. And the account

account of it is clear: for tho Heaven be a State of eternal and inexpressible Blessedness, yet 'tis future and spiritual: it makes but a weak Impression upon their Minds, and is unsutable to their Affections. Can carnal Men have but an imaginary Representation of the World to come, and their Assent to it is overshadowed and eclips'd by the present World with its Advantages and Pleasures; they cannot relish a Happiness purely spiritual. 'Tis not the Goodness of the Object, but the Inclination of the Heart that makes it desirable. The wise Philosopher observes, "That such "as the radicated Disposition and "Habit of a Man is, such will the "End appear to him." Therefore a supernatural spiritual Good cannot appear to a sensual Man so attractive, as to be chosen as his Felicity. Only *the pure in Heart can see God*, and love him, and enjoy him

him in his amiable Excellencies: the Unrenewed have no certain nor satisfying Notions of the Happiness that his Presence diffuses among the Blessed above. This will be discoursed of more particularly under another Head.

Fourthly; Satan has a great Agency in Mens Opposition to the Gospel, and their neglect of Salvation. His Title, the Tempter, implies his constant Practice. 'Tis true, he cannot hurt us against our Wills; the Enemy without could not surprize us, if the Traitor within, the corrupt Nature, did not give him Admittance; he cannot immediately work upon the Will, nor discern the Mind: without our Consent he cannot obtain a Conquest over us; therefore his prevailing Temptations do not disculpate Sinners that yield to them: he rules only in the Children of

Disobedience, they are his voluntary Slaves; but he has a strange Power in the Minds and Hearts of Men by his managing tempting Objects. The World makes an Impression upon our lower Faculties, and he improves the Impression, and excites corrupt Desires. As the Operations of the holy Spirit in Believers are secret but stronger than the Influence of the Stars: so the Workings of Satan are in the Wicked secret but powerful. I will first consider the Motives that urge him to be so active and ardent in hindering the Success of the Gospel for the Salvation of our Souls. 2. His Methods and Wiles for that end. The Motives are,

1. His eternal Enmity to God: for being under a Doom never to be reverst, his Malice is always raging and working to dishonour and displease the Righteous Judg. He

He *sinn'd from the beginning*, 'tis his unwearied and uninterrupted Work. Men in complying with his Temptations, are sway'd and carried by the Bias of their Lusts; some are brib'd by Profit, others allured by Pleasure: but his great End is, that the Law of God may be violated, his Majesty despised, and his Glory obscur'd. As in a rebellious Insurrection, the Multitude are engaged, some for Spoil, others for private Respects, but the Design of the Leader is to dethrone the King, and usurp his Scepter. Satan's Opposition against God is more fierce and stedfast than of the most resolved Rebels that trample upon the Divine Law every day: they do more accomplish his Will than their own, which will be the occasion and matter of his insulting Scorn, and furious upbraiding them hereafter. Briefly, he loves Sin for Sin's sake, as 'tis an Affront

and Provocation of the Divine Majesty, and is more pleased in the Sins of Men than in their everlasting Damnation, because the holy and righteous Lawgiver is dishonoured by their Sins, and glorified in their Punishment.

2. His old Enmity and Hatred against the Souls of Men. 'Tis another Hell to him, to see them restor'd to the Favour of God, and his glorious Image re-ingraven on them. He is a jealous Jailor, and if possible will not lose any of his Captives. Being condemn'd to everlasting Burnings, he will make them feel his Fire.

The Scripture represents him as a strong and subtile Adversary: *a roaring Lion that goes about seeking whom he may devour, and the old Serpent.* His Enmity is universal, his Diligence is equal to his Malice, and his Malice whets his Invention to lay such Trains as may be destructive

ſtructive to them. His Strength does chiefly lie in his Subtilty. If Men could ſee him in his Native Shape of Darkneſs, an infernal Fiend, the moſt curſed Creature, or what he is relatively to them, *a Liar and a Murderer from the beginning*, how would they flee with Horror from his Temptations? But he does not awake Sinners, and then wound them; he is not ſeen till felt, nor diſcover'd till he has faſten'd his Stings in their Souls. He ſpreads his Snares in the Dark; and when their Spiritual Senſes are lock'd in a Midnight Sleep, he deſtroys them.

Secondly; His Methods and Wiles for this end are various.

1. He blinds the Minds of Men, and hardens them in Unbelief. This was his firſt and ſucceſsful Temptation, and is the Pattern that he ſtill follows. He told the Woman

she should not die; and the Restraint of Fear being taken away, the Pleasure of Taste and Curiosity soon prevail'd with her to eat the forbidden Fruit. The Apostle gives this account of Mens rejecting the Truths of the Gospel: *If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the God of this World hath blinded the Minds of them who believe not, lest the Light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the Image of God, should shine unto them.* His principal Design is to encrease the natural Infidelity in the Minds of Men, who are so govern'd by Sense, that in Matters of Faith they require the Evidence of Sense: for he knows the powerful Efficacy of the Divine Doctrine where 'tis believed. Faith enters into the Conscience, opens the Heart, commands and captivates the Will and Affections, and brings the most stubborn Sinners from the Kingdom of Satan into

into the Kingdom of Christ. *He is in them,* possesses all their Faculties, and by that advantage works effectually. He has the Monarchy of their Minds, and diverts their Thoughts from pondering the Arguments that would turn their Judgments, and induce the Belief of the Gospel: he excites those carnal Affections that blind the Mind: he inchants Men with enticing sensual Objects, that they neither can nor will believe what is contrary to their Lusts. Reason, Conscience, Faith, whereby Men are primarily and chiefly distinguish'd from the Brutes, are sacrificed to the Prince of Darkness. Then they are securely his own: for the most precious Promises have no attractive Influence upon those in whom there is reigning Infidelity: the sharpest Threatnings cannot pierce through the Armour of Obstinacy.

2. The most that refuse the Offer of Grace in the Gospel, are not absolute Infidels; therefore the Tempter tries other ways to ruine them. He observes the Dispositions and Circumstances of Men, and presents such Temptations whereby they are most likely to be taken and held in his Snares. Altho Human Nature be wholly depraved, yet all Men are not cast into the same Mould: they are distinguish'd by their various Aspects, Constitutions, Desires, and Conditions of Life, and are not wrought on by the same Motives. The Tempter by his natural Sagacity and Experience (he is stiled the *old Serpent*) has exact Knowledg in the Art of discerning Men. Sometimes sudden Passions are painted in the Countenance, and he takes particular Advantage to strike in with them. But his universal Method

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is to present the fittest Baits to the natural Inclinations, and habitual Dispositions of Men: he knows the Faction within will readily open to his Call. The Sanguine are soft and dissolute, and are easily drawn to exorbitant Pleasures: The Melancholy are inclin'd to Discontent, Sorrow, Impatience, Despair: Those who have active restless Spirits, are taken with the Advantages of the World. The muddy Mind is easily stirr'd by the Offer of Gain: the voluptuous Mind is strongly allur'd by sensual Delights: the aspiring Mind is incens'd by the prospect of Honour. Now tho the Tempter be a Spirit, and not capable of those Sins which are acted by the sensible Faculties, yet not only spiritual Sins, Pride, Envy, Malignity, and the like, but Fleshly Lusts, even the foulest Actions are from his Incitations. He was not only a proud

proud Spirit, but an unclean Spirit
2 Chron. in *David*. He was a covetous Spirit in *Judas*: an hypocritical Spirit in *Ananias*: Satan put it *into his Heart to detain part of the Price, and lie to the Holy Ghost*. He presents the Temptation, and suggests Motives to embrace it. He brings the Fewel, enticing Objects, and inspires the Flame, ardent Desires to them. If burning Lusts begin to cool, and raging Corruptions are controul'd by the threatning of the Word, and the Terrors of Conscience, he will blow them up again. Now any reigning Lust is a Viceroy of Satan's, and keeps Possession for him, and consequently excludes the Son of God from Admission into the Heart.

3. He perswades Men that Religion in its Power and Strictness is not necessary: the abstaining from enormous Crimes, and the performance of some outward Service will

will be available for Salvation. Hell is the Portion of the Devil and his Children, and none are of his Race but incarnate Devils, unclean Spirits in brutish Bodies. He makes use of carnal Men, under the pretence of Friendship to perswade those who make a Shew of Conscience, to be less tender and vigilant, by telling them, this Strictness is superfluous, 'twill spoil you, make you unsociable and odious: the Wise and Learned that think to go to Heaven with the first, take a greater liberty: they will say Moderation is a Vertue, and by the pretence of Temper cherish the loathsom Distemper of Lukewarmness, that is as fatal as a deadly Coldness. The Tempter will permit Men to make use of Religion as a Medicine, a little in fainting Fits, to relieve and recover them, but not as our daily Food: not to be their diligent and constant

ſtant Practice. The crafty Serpent will abuſe the Words of the holy Spirit, *Be not righteous overmuch.* As *Judas* ſaid of the precious Ointment poured upon our Saviour, *Why was this waſte?* ſo carnal Men are apt to ſay, Why theſe ſevere Reſtraints from ſatisfying the natural Appetites? Why ſuch Circumſpection in our walking? Why keep the Lord's-day ſo religiouſly? Is it not enough to hear the Sermons? May we not afterwards unbend, and enjoy free Society, and recreate our ſelves with carnal Contentments? They do not believe that God is ſo ſtrict in his Commands, nor will be ſo exact in requiring an account for them: fond Creatures to entertain ſuch carnal Conceits of God, to think him like themſelves. They are apt to ſay, the Miniſters will fetter them all by imaginative Rules of Holineſs unpreſcribed in the Scriptures.

tures. For Men would fain have the Light, and the Law that regulates them, to be ſutable to their Appetites and Actions. But are we not commanded to imitate and honour our Pattern, *to be holy as our Heavenly Father is holy, in all manner of Converſation?* Are we not enjoined to *work out our own Salvation with Fear and Trembling; to cleanſe our ſelves from all Pollutions of Fleſh and Spirit, and to perfect Holineſs in the Fear of God: to follow Holineſs with the moſt zealous and unſatisfied Deſires*, that, if it were poſſible, we might anticipate Heaven on Earth? Can there be any Excuſe for neglecting theſe holy Duties?

There are none more dangerouſly deceived than thoſe that think they are holy enough, and make no queſtion of the Favour of God and their final Happineſs. They condemn profane outragious Sinners; thoſe who viſibly come ſhort of them,

them, they think will fall ſhort of Salvation; but to excel them, they think is a needleſs Preciſeneſs, a Pride of Singularity, a Mask of Hypocriſy. 'Tis one of Satan's Arts to conceal the Good that is in the Saints, that they may condemn themſelves, and to conceal the Evil that is in the Unregenerate, that they may flatter themſelves. How many fall as deep as Hell from ſuch high Hopes? for he that does not ſeriouſly deſire and endeavour to be renewed into the unſpotted Image of God, was never truly renewed.

SER-

SERMON VIII.

LUKE xiv. 23.

The Lord said to the Servant, Compel them to come in, that my House may be full.

3*dly*. IF Conscience be not seared and senseless, but awakens Sinners to reflect upon their Condition, and to seek for the pardoning Mercy of God, he deceives them with false Notions of Faith and Repentance, and hinders their entire Compliance with the Terms of Mercy offered in the Gospel. Final Unbelief and Impenitence utterly exclude Men from Salvation: for the Death of Christ was not appointed to be a Sacrifice for those Sins. There is no Salvation to be obtain'd without

out the Remiſſion of Sin, no Remiſſion without the Blood of Chriſt, no Application of that precious Blood without Faith. This is the vital Qualification required in all juſtified Perſons: for it has a peculiar Efficiency in receiving Chriſt and Pardon, and aſcribes the Glory of it intirely to the Mercy of God and Merits of Chriſt. 'Tis ſaid,

John 1. 12. *To as many as received him, he gave Power to become the Sons of God, to thoſe who believed on his Name.* Receiving is relative to God's Offer of Chriſt to the Condemned and Miſerable, and implies the taking him in all the Eſſentials of his Office; as a Prophet, to inſtruct us in our Duty and Happineſs by his Word and Spirit; as a Prieſt, to atone the Divine Diſpleaſure by his Propitiation and Interceſſion; as a King, to govern us by his Law, and to beſtow ſpiritual and eternal Bleſſings on us. Faith receives whole

whole Christ as a Kingly Priest, and a saving Prince; he is stiled a *Priest upon a Throne, a Prince and a Saviour, to give Repentance and Remission of Sins.* He purchas'd the Forgiveness of Sins as a Priest by his Sufferings on the Cross, and pardons as a King upon the Throne: from hence it necessarily follows, that Faith receives Pardon from him in that Relation wherein he procur'd it, and confers it. The Apostle declares, *He died for our Sins, and rose again for our Justification*, and thereby redeem'd us, and acquir'd a Dominion over us: then 'tis clear and consequent, that saving Faith receives him for all those Uses for which God did appoint him; and accordingly *purifies the Heart, overcomes the World, works by Love*: and Love is the Spring and Substance of every Duty, the *fulfilling of the Law.* Now Carnal Men are deceived in this Imagination, that

the ſingle Act of reſting upon Chriſt is ſufficient to entitle them to the Promiſe of Salvation to all that believe in him: they deſire an Intereſt in Chriſt, to quiet their Conſciences; and the World, to ſatisfy their Affections. They will reſt on him as a Redeemer, but reject him as a Lord: they would enjoy his Salvation, but will not endure his Dominion: they will come to partake of the Feſtival-Entertainment, the Pardon of their Sins, but not for the Honour of the Bridegroom. As if the Goſpel were a free Charter to Sin, and gave an impure Indulgence to the vicious Affections; which is as inconſiſtent with it, as the Darkneſs of the Night with Noon-day in the ſame Hemiſphere: for then it would foil it ſelf, and fruſtrate its own End. Our Saviour firſt redeems from Sin, *from the vain Converſation*, then from Hell.

1 Pet. 1. 18.

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There can be no regular saving Trust on his Death, without an unfeigned Resolution to live within the Compass of his Laws. *He is the Author of Eternal Salvation to all that obey him.* 'Tis a blasphemous Conceit, that he will save Men with their Sins. If they will die in such a pleasing Dream, who can prevent it?

2. Men are miserably deceived about Repentance. This is indispensably required not only by the Command, but as a Disposition that qualifies the Sinner for pardoning Mercy. For altho the Majesty and Supremacy of God be illustriously visible in pardoning Sinners, and 'tis most evident that his Authority is above the Rigor of the Law, and his Mercy is infinitely free; yet they are always exercis'd correspondently to his essential and unchangeable Perfections, his ruling Wisdom, his

unſpotted Holineſs, and governing Juſtice: From hence it follows that a Sinner remaining in the Love, and under the Power of his Sins, is not a capable Object of pardoning Mercy. Who can conceive that a wiſe Prince ſhould ſend forth a Proclamation of Pardon to Rebels, without their Conſent to return to their Allegiance? *John* the Baptiſt, the Forerunner of the Riſing Sun of Righteouſneſs, the Morning-Star of the Goſpel, preach'd the *Baptiſm of Repentance for the Remiſſion of Sins.* Even our Saviour begins his preaching the Goſpel with this, *Repent ye, and believe the Goſpel.* St. *Peter* directed thoſe who were anxious and inquiring about their Salvation, *Repent, and be baptized in the Name of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, for the Remiſſion of Sins.* He repeats this Doctrine in *Acts* 3.19. *Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your Sins may be blotted out, when the Times of refreſh-*

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ing shall come from the Presence of the Lord. And he gives Testimony of the Resurrection of Christ, *Him hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give Repentance to* Israel, *and Forgiveness of Sins.* According to this unalterable Tenor of the Gospel, Repentance is the Condition that qualifies the Subject, without which no Man is pardoned. Some are strangely scrupulous of using this word *Condition*, tho 'tis authorized by the full Current of the Reformed Divines, and I know none more convenient to express the necessity of it in a pardon'd Person. Our Saviour tells his Disciples, *Ye are my Friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you*: Are not those words a Conditional Assertion, upon what Terms they possess that inestimable Privilege of being his Friends? Thus when God invites Men to come out from the Pollutions of the World, and to

touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you, and I will be your Father, and you shall be my Sons and Daughters, saith the Lord Almighty: Are not these Conditional Promises? And upon the Performance of the Terms, the Blessing will be bestowed, and not otherwise.

'Tis objected, that the asserting Repentance to be the Condition of Pardon, lessens the Grace of the Gospel: but this is a great Mistake, for Repentance is an Evangelical Duty and Grace. The Law requires Innocence and perfect Obedience, or condemns without Mercy: the Gospel commands and accepts Repentance. This Grace was purchas'd by our Saviour, and is wrought in us by the holy Spirit; and join'd with Faith, are the first Fruits of the returning Sinner to God. When 'tis exercis'd in the most eminent degrees, it has not the least Merit nor Causality in the obtaining Pardon. If a repenting

Sinner

Sinner could fill the Air with his Sighs, and Heaven with his Tears; if all his vital Springs were open'd, and Streams of Blood flow'd out, they cannot be satisfactory to God's injured Justice. The unreconcilable Hatred of Sin, the ardent Love of Holiness, and stedfast Resolution to follow it, which are Ingredients in sincere Repentance, tho they are pleasing to God, yet are the Duty of the reasonable Creature before the commission of Sin, and therefore can deserve nothing of God. But the ordaining an inseparable Connexion between Repentance and Pardon, is honourable to God, and very beneficial to Men: for there is no State of Misery more miserable than for the Sinner to be hardned in his Sins. But to return from this Digression.

The Scripture describes Repentance by a sincere Change and Re-

novation of the Mind, the leading Faculty; by the entire turning of the Heart from the love of Sin to the love of Holineſs; by the active lively Paſſions, Sorrow, Fear, Shame, Indignation, Zeal, that are principal Ingredients in it; and by the Fruits *worthy of Repentance, and Works meet for Repentance.* 'Tis called *Repentance from dead Works*, and *Repentance unto Life.* Now Men are willingly deceived with an inſincere and ineffective Repentance: either with a meer mental Change, or with broken Reſolutions inſtead of the intire Heart; or with the leaving ſome Sins, and retaining others that are ſutable to their Humours and Lusts. They confeſs their Sins, and condemn themſelves for them: ſometimes they have flaſhing Thoughts, melting Affections, good Purpoſes to forſake Sin, this they think to be ſincere Repentance: but when a Temptation appears,

appears, they are easily overcome, and live in the habitual Practice of their provoking Sins. This Conceit of their being true Penitents, is as unreasonable, as if one that has a returning Ague, should think himself freed from his Disease in the intervals of his Fits. Now to quiet Conscience, they readily apply to themselves the words of the Apostle, *What I do, I allow not.* And since the best Saints, while they are in sympathy with frail Flesh cannot be perfect, but many Sins they unwarily and unwillingly commit, which are Infirmities lamented by them, and graciously forgiven by their Heavenly Father; therefore indulgent Sinners take shelter under this Pretence, that their Relapses are meer unavoidable Infirmities. But what Weakness can be pretended for wilful habitual Sins? Such Excuses do not cover their Guilt, but discover

discover their strong Affections to their Lusts: They have not the Excuse of Ignorance: to pretend the Flesh and the World are omnipotent Enemies that cannot be resisted, is to blaspheme the Grace of the holy Spirit. In short, a new Life is inseparable from Repentance in its Reality. Sad and serious Thoughts, Sighs and Tears, the sorrowful Confession of Sins, and good Purposes against them, are the Blossoms of Repentance, ineffective without the substantial Fruits of it in a reformed Conversation. 'Tis one of the Arts of Satan to join things together that are inconsistent: In Paradise he assured the Woman that she might take of the forbidden Tree, and of the Tree of Life: and he now deceives many with the hope that their indulged repeated Sins are consistent with Repentance. But if Men do not forsake the foul

Sins

Sins they lament, their Sorrow will go with them to Hell, and ſettle in the Worm *that ſhall never die.*

Fifthly; The Tempter hinders Men from Compliance with the preſent Invitations of Grace, by ſuggeſting there will be time enough for accepting them hereafter, and a future Repentance will be ſufficient to redreſs all their Miſcarriages. By this Deceit he trains them on to Ruin. By this he eludes the Force of preſent Convictions: that without Repentance they muſt periſh for ever, and puts Men out of the Compaſs of Converſion. 'Tis clear by its own Light, and needs no other Proof, that preſent Obedience is due to the Commands of God; *To day if you will hear his Voice, harden not your Hearts*: Yet againſt all the Evidence of the Word without, and of Conſcience within

within, Satan ſo ſtrongly deceives Men, that they rebelliouſly neglect their Duty, till their Time and Life are expiring. But how unbecoming, how difficult, how hazardous is a late Repentance? How unbecoming is it to put off God till hereafter? Such is his glorious Majeſty, we ſhould with the moſt reverent Reſpect, and humble Thankfulneſs obey his firſt Call. If a Prince ſhould invite a Subject to come to him for ſome great Favour, would he ſo break all the Rules of *Decorum*, as to delay his coming, by ſaying, Hereafter will be time enough? And what is the greateſt Majeſty on Earth to the God of Glory? no more than a Mote to the Sun: and proportionably the Indignity ariſes to neglect the Offers of his Grace.

Beſides, how incongruous is it to give the Flower of our Time and Strength to our Luſts, and to reſerve

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the Bran for God? To spend the Age of our vital and vigorous Actions in the Vanities and Business of the World, and to allow only our languishing Age for the obtaining of Heaven? That Men should content themselves with dead Affections in his Service who is their Life, that were so lively in the Service of Sin that is their Death?

How difficult is a late Repentance? Can you repent and believe at your pleasure? Men think that in their Age, after the ebbing and retirement of the carnal Affections, they shall more easily forsake their Sins: but 'tis a pernicious Deceit. The native Corruption of Mens Hearts, alienates them from a dutiful return to God; and contracted Corruption by habitual Practice, fastens them in Sin as their Centre. In Youth, when the Blood and Spirits are high and fierce, the Body has a corrupting Influence upon the Mind;

Mind; but by Cuſtom in Sin, the Mind is ſo depraved, that it heats the frozen Blood and corrupts the Body. Suppoſe the exciting Grace of the Spirit be not totally withdrawn, which has often been ineffectual; Can it be expected that after Men have been hardened in the commiſſion and continuance of Sin, they ſhould be more receptive of Heavenly Impreſſions? A Diſeaſe neglected at firſt, that ſtealingly ſlips into the Habit of the Body, and gradually weakens Nature, becomes at laſt uncontroulable and incurable.

How hazardous is it to neglect preſent Obedience to the Call of Divine Mercy? Our Days, in the Language of the Pſalmiſt, *are but as an hand-breadth*; and can Men extend their Lives beyond their Span? A vaſt Eternity follows without Dimenſions, an undivided Duration. It is no more in their Power to continue Time to come, than to recal

recal Time paſt. How many are ſurpriz'd by haſty Death in their Security, and die in their unrepented Sins, and periſh for ever? The wiſe Man alarms the Sluggard with approaching Poverty, and his Expreſſions are very applicable to the Delayers of Repentance: Death comes like a Traveller, gradually by ſilent Steps; and as an armed Man, will irreſiſtably arreſt them: and Damnation follows, which they can neither repel nor diſcover till they are ſeiz'd by it. O that deluded Sinners would conſider, that nothing ſo ripens them for Death, and accelerates Judgment, as the Preſumption that the Seaſon of Grace will continue notwithſtanding their laviſh and careleſs waſting it!

But ſuppoſe that Life be extended to the utmoſt Date, can you expect that the holy Spirit ſhould viſit you that have been ſo long putrifying in the Grave, and breath

a new Life into you? 'Tis the most severe threatning, *My Spirit shall not always strive with Man*; and then their Case is desperate. There is a fearful Example recorded in Scripture; the old World was first drowned in Sensuality, and resisted the holy Spirit till he was withdrawn; and then the Deluge wash'd away those Swine in their Mire. Can you expect that at last when the World and your Sins leave you, God will accept and receive you? You are commanded to seek him in your early Spring, in the first Dawnings of his Light and Favour, and is a poor Remnant of your Life sufficient for obtaining his Mercy? The Harlots respected not the dead, but contended for the living Child: Satan and the World strive to have the prime and best part of your Lives, and will God be contented with the dying Remains? Or, do you expect an easy Composition

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for all the Abuſe of his Benefits, becauſe of his Patience? Do you preſume becauſe he forbears ſo long, he will readily forgive at laſt? The Servant not call'd to an account till he was run into an irrecoverable Arrearage of ten thouſand Talents, was delivered to the Tormentors till he ſhould pay all his Debt. How are Men degenerated, and fallen lower than the Brute Creatures? *The Stork in the Heaven knows her appointed times; and the Turtle, and the Crane, and the Swallow obſerve the time of their coming; but Men know not the Judgment of the Lord.* This Conſideration made our compaſſionate Saviour dip his Words in Tears. *He beheld the City, and wept over it, ſaying, If thou hadſt known, even thou, at leaſt in this thy day, the things that belong to thy Peace! but now they are hid from thine Eyes.* Jer. 8. 7.

O wretched deceived Souls! how long will you neglect a Saviour

and Salvation? How long shall *he wait to be gracious*, and expect your lingering Repentance in vain? Remember the time of Grace is limited: if you refuse Obedience to the present Call, do you know he will renew the Offers of his Grace? *Now is the accepted Time, now is the Day of Salvation*: Will this *Now* last for ever? There is no *Now* of Favour and Hope in Hell. 'Tis true, God is merciful; and 'tis one of his Royal Titles, *The God of Patience*: though Threatnings are denounced against Sinners, and Judgments are ready to seize upon them, he repents and stops his Wrath: but there is no State more fearful in this World, than when Men by neglecting Repentance, make God *weary of repenting*. *When Patience has had its perfect Work* towards the Unrelenting and Unreformed, Justice succeeds: before God cuts off a Sinner, he cuts off all

all his Excuſes. Read with Fear the firſt of the *Proverbs*, *Becauſe I have called, and you refuſed; I will laugh at your Calamity, and mock when your Fear cometh.* God's Frown, much more his Scorn, is infinitely terrible and inſupportable. Thoſe who delay Repentance till the Body is diſeaſed all over, and Death is printed in the Countenance, and the languiſhing Lights are almoſt quench'd, and the vital Frame is near a Diſſolution, yet preſume a few Sighs will tranſport their Souls to Heaven, How juſt and dreadful will their Diſappointment be? However they *are deceived, God is not mocked; as a Man ſows, he ſhall reap.*

SERMON IX.

LUKE xiv. 23.

The Lord said to the Servant, Compel them to come in, that my House may be full.

II. I Am now to consider the Means by which Men are wrought on to accept of the Invitations of Grace in the Gospel. The Sum of what has been discoursed of sinful and miserable Man is this, The Understanding, the directing Faculty, is in ignorant Darkness, and a dead Slumber, not apprehensive of his Misery. A dead Eye does not see its want of Sight, nor a dead Heart feel its want of Life. If the Head be obstructed with clammy Humours, the

the whole Body is without Senſe: for the Nerves have their Root in the Brain, and are the Channels to convey powerful Spirits, to give Senſe, and Vigor, and Motion to all the Parts. The Will is a fierce and free Faculty, commanding and active, perverted and ſtubborn againſt the holy Law of God. The Affections are exceedingly diſordered, and ſtrongly inclin'd to ſenſual Things that flatter them with Satisfaction, and very tumultuous and fiery againſt whatever ſhall croſs their natural Inclinations. Now how can one ſo ſtupid and refractory, be made ſoft and flexible to the Call of Mercy? As the *Epicurean* in *Tully* objects againſt the making of the World, *quæ machinæ qui vectes*, What Engines, what Leavers were uſed in raiſing this vaſt Fabrick? What he ſpoke in Deriſion, may be ſaid with Wonder; What Engines, what Inſtruments

are uſed in craning up a Soul ſunk below the Center, to the higheſt Heaven! What in making the new Creation, that is more glorious and laſting than the firſt! 'Tis a Work reſpectively impoſſible, not abſolutely, it can only be effected by the Power of God.

There is no Principle of Recovery left in fallen Man. The Converſion of him from Sin to Holineſs, and from the Creature to God, is a Miracle of Grace: if he converted himſelf, it were ſupermiraculous. God can by his commanding Power bring Light out of Darkneſs; but 'tis plainly impoſſible that Darkneſs ſhould produce Light.

The external Miniſtration of the Goſpel, without the concomitant Miniſtry of the Spirit, is ineffective. The Divineſt Preacher cannot ſoften *the Iron Sinew*, nor melt the *Heart of Stone*, nor make the Rock to tremble.

ble. The Prophet *Isaiah*, whose sublime Eloquence overcomes all the admired Orators of the World, yet complains, *Who has believed our Report? to whom is the Arm of the Lord reveal'd?* The Angels of Light, if they were sent from Heaven, and were in this sense *ministring Spirits*, they could not by their Seraphick Zeal, and most excellent Eloquence change and reform Sinners. One evil Angel seduced and corrupted the best Man, *Adam*, in the State of Innocence and Happiness: but a Council of good Angels cannot restore one Man, tho the least tainted, to Holiness and Felicity. No Creature can be a Creator; the Sanctification of a Sinner is a new Creation. 'Tis only *the Word of Life* spoken by *the Lord of Life*, that can raise dead Bodies and dead Souls. Suppose the Word of God be assisted by his Rod, yet that will be ineffectual to cleanse and change Isa. 53.

their Hearts without Divine Grace. 'Tis according to the wise Order of God, whom the Word does not convert, the Rod is made use of to cure; and whom the Rod does not cure, the Sword cuts off.

Prosperity furnishes the Carnal Appetites with delightful Objects, and Men are easily induced to neglect their Duty: like Children that forget their Lesson when they are at play. Sense that reigns in Beasts, and should serve in Men, is then predominant. But Affliction imbitters the carnal Sweets, and is a proper Means to fix the Thoughts, and restore the Mind to its Right and Jurisdiction: as Blows and hard Usage bind up the ranging Fancy in distracted Persons; tames and tires them, and thereby reduces them to Sobriety. Thus God is often pleased, by Afflictions, *to shew Men their Transgressions, to open their Ears to Discipline,*

Job 36.

pline, and effectually command them to return from their Iniquities. But without the Instruction of his Spirit joins with the Voice of the Rod, the utmost Effect of even sharp and long Afflictions is a forc'd and fading Repentance. Constrained Devotion is like Fire struck out of a Flint, hardly got, and soon gone. Thus 'tis said of the *Israelites* in the Wilderness, *When he slew them, they sought him, they return'd and sought early after God; but their Heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his Covenant.* How many open Rebels have been awaken'd by the fear of Death? and when they have tasted and seen the Terrors of the Lord, what Addresses, what Submissions, what Promises have they made to God? but after their Reprieve, how soon have they forgot the past Terrors, and broke all the Bars of Reason, and of their Resolutions, and been as unre-

unreform'd as ever. The wise Man tells us, *Bray a Fool in a Mortar, pound him in pieces, his Folly will remain in him.*

Nay, Miracles without the Application of them by Grace to the Spirits of Men, are ineffectual to work Faith and Repentance. The End of them is by the Evidence of Sense to excite the Mind, to consider the Power that works them. But they may astonish the Sense, and the Mind not be convinc'd; or if convinc'd, yet they leave no permanent Operation upon the Hearts of the Spectators. *Moses* charges the *Israelites* that notwithstanding they had seen all the miraculous Strokes of God's Power upon *Pharaoh* and his Servants, *yet the Lord hath not given you an Heart to perceive, and Eyes to see, and Ears to hear to this day.* When the Son of God appear'd in his own Likeness, and did such numerous and conspicuous

Deut. 29. 4.

cuous Miracles that compell'd the moſt ſtubborn Devils to acknowledg his Deity, yet the *Phariſees* remained obſtinate and inconvincible. The Souldiers who ſaw him riſing in Power and Glory, and were almoſt frighten'd to Death at the ſight, yet continued obdurate in their Infidelity.

Our Saviour aſſures us, *No Man can come to him, except the Father which hath ſent me, draw him.* The Words are full of Emphaſis, *No Man*: the Negation is univerſal; not only the Act is denied, *No Man comes*, but the Power, *can come*; no leſs than Omnipotent Grace draws him. A carnal Man will *not come to Chriſt for Life*; and he cannot will to come: for his Mind is ſo fore-laid with Prejudice, and his Will is ſo depraved and intangled with the love of Sin, that he cannot ſincerely * deſire to be ſet free. Every delightful Sin is like a charm'd Circle out

John 6. 44.

* Nec te poſſe carere velim.

out of which the Sinner cannot move.

We are not to conceive of this Disability, as if Sinners had not deliberative and elective Faculties to consider and choose what is best: such a Disability would be an Argument for their Innocence and Justification: Neither as if Men had a Will to forsake Sin, and wanted Power; like a miserable Slave that sighs after Liberty, but is fasten'd by heavy Fetters: but the perverse Will keeps them in Bondage: *They serve divers Lusts and Pleasures*, and delight in their Fetters. 'Tis a voluntary culpable Impotence join'd with a strong Reluctancy to Grace: 'tis the *impudent imperious Weakness of the Whorish Woman* charged upon the *Israelites*, and admits of no Apology and Defence: Nay, it aggravates the Sin and Sentence of such depraved Creatures. As there is in Vertue and Holiness a Divine Degree

gree of Perfection, that makes Persons not capable of departing from their Duty: so there is a Diabolical Degree in Sin, when the Soul is so depraved, that it cannot abstain from doing Evil. And as consummate Vertue is most worthy of Esteem and Praise; so when a vicious Habit contracted by long Custom in Sin, absolutely possesses the Soul, 'tis most worthy of Abhorrence.

Now only Divine Grace *compels Sinners to come to Christ*, and to partake of saving Mercies: that is, changes the Bias of the Will, and makes it obedient to the Heavenly Call. God is the supream Mover, and turns all Occurrences in the World to his Purpose and Praise: and the Hearts of Men are not exempt from his Dominion, but he *turns them as the Rivers of Waters*. The effectual Operation of Grace does not violate the native Freedom of the Will,

Will, but is congruous to it. God's *drawing is by teaching*: *Every one that hath heard and learned of the Father, comes to me.* When the Author of the Gospel is the Teacher of it, the most stupid and obstinate Sinners shall be convinc'd and obedient. To make this more clear, I will briefly consider the Intellectual Frame of Man, and the natural Subordination of the Faculties in their various Operations. As the Spring in a Watch, so the Understanding is the first Mover in the reasonable Creature: the Understanding has a double Faculty; the Apprehensive, to discover the Good and Evil in Objects presented to it; and the Judicative, to compare and ponder the Good and Evil discern'd in things; and accordingly to esteem or disvalue, to approve or dislike. The Will chooses what the Understanding commends, and rejects what the Judgment condemns. The Affecti-

Affections of Desire and Delight are from the Choice of the Will, the Affections of Aversation and Flight are from the Rejection of the Will. The Pursuit or Neglect of Things, the Application or Opposition we make in our Actions and Practice to them, is from the Delight or Distaste of Things in our Affections. But when Lust enter'd into the Soul, it perverted this Order. As the strong Tide of the Sea pouring into Rivers, turns them back to their Springs, in a Course contrary to their natural Motion: thus the Heart overflowing with a strong Tide of Corruption, empties it self into the Head the Spring of Actions: the unholy Affections work upon the Will to reject the Offers of Grace in the Gospel; and the corrupt Will works upon the Mind to vilify them. 'Tis to be observ'd, that the Tempter works upon Mens Minds in the unnatural way;

way; he makes use of the disorder'd Affections to pervert the Will, and of the perverted Will to divert the Understanding from due Consideration of Objects, and to corrupt its Judgment. But God works by the Understanding on the Will and Affections, according to the regular Dependance of those Faculties.

The first Beam of saving Grace shines into the Mind with so strong a Light, discovering Spiritual and Eternal Things in their Reality and Glory, that the Will and Affections are drawn to choose, and embrace, and to follow them with Zeal and Constancy. In this blessed Work, we are to consider the Revelation of the Object, and the Irradiation of the Mind. As in the discerning of Corporal things, there must be Light in the Eye, or there can be no Seeing, and Light in the Air, or there can be no Sight: So the great Mysteries of Godliness, which

which are of impoſſible diſcovery without Revelation, are made known in the Goſpel; and the Underſtanding is illuminated to ſee them in their Reality and tranſcendent Goodneſs, as the Apoſtle expreſſes, *This is a faithful ſaying, and worthy of all Acceptation, that Jeſus Chriſt is come into the World to ſave Sinners.* He prays for the *Epheſians, That the God of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt,* Ephes. 1. *the Father of Glory, may give them the Spirit of Wiſdom and Revelation, in the Knowledg of him; that the Eyes of their Underſtanding being inlightened, they may know what is the Hope of his Calling, and what the Riches of the Glory of his Inheritance in the Saints.* Altho the Evidence of Faith be not ſo clear as that of Senſe, yet 'tis ſo ſure, that the Adherence of Faith is more firm to its Objects, tho future, than of Senſe to things preſent. With the Irradiation of the Mind there is ſuch a determining

fluence on the Will and the Affections, that Christ and Heaven are joyfully chosen before all things. In converting Sinners there is not a bare proposal of the Objects of Faith, with the Motives to believe and accept them, and Men are left to their own Discretion and Choice: The Holy Ghost who certainly knows the manner and efficacy of his own Operations, expresses converting Grace *by the*
Ephes. 1. *exceeding Greatness of his Power toward them that believe, according to the working of his mighty Power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the Dead, and set him at his own Right-hand in Heaven.* 'Tis true, the Principle of Resistance in corrupt Nature is not quite extinguish'd; but actual Resistance is overcome by the holy Spirit, who works *to will and to do of his good Pleasure.*

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In the Human Will we are to consider the Faculty of chooſing and refuſing, which includes in it Freedom and Liberty, without which it ceaſes to be a Will. 2. The Depravation of it: and this conſiſts in a neceſſity of chooſing the Evil of Sin, repreſented as pleaſing to the Carnal Affections, and rejecting the Law of God, which is holy and good. The ſinning Will contracted this neceſſity. Now Grace does not deſtroy the Nature of the Will, but changes its Quality: of Carnal and Earthly makes it Holy and Heavenly: this is expreſt *by a new Heart, and a new Spirit.* And *when the Spirit of the Mind is renewed by* illuminating Grace, and the Will and Affections of the Heart are renewed by purifying Grace, the Will does as freely and neceſſarily chooſe Spiritual and Eternal Things, as in the State of Nature it choſe Things pleaſing to

the corrupt Appetites. God draws Sinners to himself with *the Cords of a Man*, in a rational way, without Violence to their Faculties, and fastens them *by Bands of Love*. He instructs the Soul, and infuses such a Principle and Disposition as is sutable to the Doctrine. When the Will is directed and drawn, by the illuminating Guidance of the Mind, to choose and embrace the most excellent Good, and the other Faculties to obey, this is Man's true Liberty. In Heaven the unvariable fixing the Will upon God our Supream Good, is its Perfection and Felicity.

The outward Means of inducing Men to comply with God's Call, is the preaching of the Word. If it were the Will of God, he can immediately create Men as *Adam*, in compleat Stature, and with the Perfection of Reason; but he makes use of Second Causes, forms them

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in the Womb, brings them into the World by the ordinary way of the Earth, and raiſes them from Infancy to a mature State, according to the Rules of Nature. Thus God could by one Act ſanctify Sinners in Perfection; but he is pleaſed by the preaching of the Word to convert Sinners, and gradually perfect the Saints: The Gospel is the Miniſtry of Reconciliation, and of Regeneration. And this is very congruous to the Human Nature: for the Sinner is not converted, as a Stone aſcends by a forc'd and blind Motion, but is inſtructed and affected by propoſing Objects to his Mind and Will, and acts according to the Impreſſion he received from them. Now the Natural Man being *a Servant to Corruption*, the external propounding of the moſt powerful Objects and Motives cannot change him: the converting Efficacy of the Word

2 Cor. 5.

James 1.

is from Jesus Christ. To make this more evident, let us consider, In every Action where an Instrument is us'd, the Action is properly ascrib'd to the Agent. God is a pure Spirit, without any Composition of bodily Organs of Speech; yet when he form'd a Voice in the Air for the proclaiming the Law, Exod. 20. 1. *He spake*; and whether by any created Voice, or by the Voice of Deut. 5. 4. Men appointed for preaching the Gospel, he speaks. In human speaking, the Voice is from the Tongue, but the Sense and Meaning is from the Mind that directs it. From hence it is that the Gospel preached is of admirable Efficacy, and works above the Power of any Creature. Heb. 4. 12. *The Word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged Sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of Soul and Spirit, and of the Joints and Marrow; and is a Discerner of the Thoughts and Intents*

of

of the Heart. It ſubdues open Rebels, and makes their Pride and Confidence fall as low as Hell; it mollifies the moſt obdurate, and makes them compliant to the Invitations of Grace. And altho the Miniſter be never ſo mean in his Perſon and Appearance, yet a weak Inſtrument in an Almighty Hand does Wonders.

Our bleſſed Saviour in his Perſon was the firſt Preacher of the Goſpel; and in his Sermons we are directed how to work upon the Reaſon, and the Affections of Sinners, by which alone they are capable to be moved. The Subſtance of his ſeveral Sermons was, *Repent ye, and believe the Goſpel.* Mark 1.

1. The Order and Progreſs of converting Grace is by the Conviction of the Mind, to turn the Will and Affections. Sin prevails in Men by the *love of Pleaſure*; and

till there be a mixture of what is more bitter than Sin is ſweet, they will not forſake it. *The World corrupted by Luſt*, is an imaginary Paradiſe, wherein there is nothing but *forbidden Fruit*; and the Fruit is ſo pleaſant to the Eyes and Taſte, that only flaming Terrors will expel them out of it. No Man will cut off his Right-hand till an incurable Gangreen has ſeiz'd on it. The light neglected Notions of Heaven are ineffective to reform Sinners; till the Terrors of the Lord are ſet in array againſt them, they are faſten'd in their Sins. Of this there is viſible and frequent Experience: how many that have lived in a careleſs Contempt of God till their laſt Sickneſs, and when they feel themſelves ſinking to the Grave and Hell, and Conſcience is an exact Remembrancer and terrible Accuſer of all their inward Wickedneſs and notorious Sins,

then

then what furious Reflections do they make upon themſelves? and what Promiſes do they make if they might be ſpar'd? 'Tis therefore the firſt Duty of Miniſters, by clearing Light and convincing Strength to work on Conſcience, and by the Mediation of it to apply Guilt and Wrath to the Sinner, that he may be reſtleſs in his Sins. *The Wrath of God is revealed from Heaven againſt all Ungodlineſs, and Unrighteouſneſs of Men*: 'tis decreed before the World was, 'tis denounc'd in the Word, and ſhall be fully executed in the *Day of Wrath, and the Revelation of the righteous Judgment of God*: nothing is more certain than that Day, and nothing ſo heavy as that Wrath. 'Tis a Burden ſo inſupportable, that the Son of God was ready to ſink under its Weight: he meekly and ſilently endur'd all the cruel Rage of his Enemies, but mournfully broke forth, *My God,* Rom. 1.

God, my God, Why haſt thou forſaken me! Who can underſtand the Conſequence of that Complaint? Who can ſupport himſelf under the Apprehenſion of an abſent and angry God? When the convinced Perſon ponders his Sins, what Indignities he has offered to the glorious God his Maker and Preſerver, his Lawgiver and Judg; that he has abus'd his Mercies, perverted his Benefits, and emploied them in the Service of Satan; that he has deſpis'd his Juſtice, and ventur'd upon his inflam'd Anger for tranſient Pleaſure and trifling Profits; when theſe killing Aggravations are duly conſider'd and laid cloſe to the Heart, how are all the ſorrowful Affections moved? ſerious Grief that ſprings from the Depth of the Soul, confounding Shame, anxious inquiring Fear, to ſtop the Execution of the fatal Sentence paſt againſt him? Thus 'tis related of thoſe

those Converts at the first Sermon of St. *Peter*, that being convinc'd of their Crimson Guilt in their crucifying of the Lord Jesus, *they were pricked in their Heart, and said to the Apostles, Men and Brethren, what shall we do?* Then Sinners will humbly sue for Peace by the blessed Peacemaker Jesus Christ: then Salvation will be so much the sweeter, by how much the Danger was more threatning. The Recovery from Death to Life is a double Life.

2. The Lord Jesus must be propos'd as an all-sufficient and compassionate Saviour, *who invites the weary and heavy-laden to come to him for Rest.* This is the order of the Spirit's Operations, *first to convince of Sin, then of Righteousness.* 'Tis true, there are diversities of Workings; the Spirit instructs and terrifies Sinners by his Office of Bondage, but not always in the same manner and degrees: but the Soul is so humbled

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by the ſight of Sin, and impendent Wrath, as it ſees and feels the neceſſity of a Saviour, and is willing to comply with the Terms of Mercy offered in the Goſpel. *The whole need not a Phyſician, but thoſe who are ſick.* A condemned Man values a Sheet of Paper wherein his Pardon is written and ſealed, more than the Conveyance of a rich Eſtate. One near drowning values a Cord thrown out for his Reſcue, more than a Crown. Thus when the Guilty are deeply ſenſible they have loſt the Favour of God, and cannot fly from his Power, and there is but a ſtep between them and Eternal Death, then a Saviour will be infinitely precious, and they will entirely cloſe with him. Now the Goſpel repreſents the Son of God incarnate.

1*ſt.* An all-ſufficient Saviour by his Propitiation, and Interceſſion. The Excellency of his Obedience, and

and the Excellency of his Person were influential to obtain the Pardon of Sin. His Propriety in the Sacrifice, and the Value of it, was requisite to atone the just Displeasure of God for our Offences. 'Tis said, he *offered his own Body on the Tree*: his peculiar Right in it was requisite to make it a proper and acceptable Sacrifice. 'Tis true, the Father and holy Spirit had the same Right in the Human Nature of Christ as the Son had, with respect to the making it: but the Son by assuming it into a Personal Union with himself, has a peculiar Right in it, and offer'd his own in a strict sense. And in Consequence to this, his Sacrifice was of infinite Value: He did not compound with God, but paid a Ransom equivalent to what was due for Sinners. He bled a Fountain from his wounded Side, *that cleanses from all Sin.* 1 Joh. 2.

2*dly*. By

2*dly*. By his Interceſſion. *He is able to ſave to the uttermoſt all that come to God by him, for he ever lives to make Interceſſion for them.* God pardons Sin as a Soveraign upon the Throne: his Authority is preſerved entire without any Condeſcenſion of his Perſon; therefore the Blood of Chriſt ſhed on the Croſs, is pleaded in Heaven to reconcile God to us: he ſatisfied Juſtice, and ſollicites Mercy: *his Blood ſpeaks ſtill*, and its Voice is as powerful as ever. The Prevalency of his Interceſſion depends upon the Dignity of his Sacrifice; the Dearneſs of his Perſon to the Father, does alſo aſſure us of his favourable Audience. He declar'd on Earth, *I know thou always heareſt me.*

3*dly*. The Goſpel ſets forth his Willingneſs to ſave us. Faith has an Aſpect upon Chriſt as able and willing to ſave: for Power without a Will to ſave is unprofitable,

and

and the Will without Power is fruitleſs and ineffectual. For the begetting of Faith we are to conſider the Propoſal and Offer of Grace in the Goſpel, and the Promiſe of it.

1. In the Goſpel there is a Propoſal of Grace to all: the Invitation is univerſal; *Whoever will, let him come to the Waters of Life freely.* Our Saviour gave this Command to the Apoſtles, *Preach the Goſpel to every Creature.* Neither the number nor quality of Mens Sins are a Bar againſt their coming to Chriſt for Life. None are excluded but thoſe who exclude themſelves. In the Parable thoſe *were earneſtly invited by the Command of the Maſter of the Feaſt, who refuſed to come.* This Offer of Grace and Life to all that will humbly receive it, is the firſt Foundation of Faith, and induces our Acceptance of it: for without this, the

ſelf-

ſelf-condemned Sinner ſinks into Miſery bottomleſs and helpleſs. The moſt miſerable Deſpair is drawn from Impoſſibility. If Men think 'tis impoſſible to obtain what they deſire, they will not endeavour to obtain. 'Tis eaſily clear'd by the Scriptures, if Men will believe the Scriptures when they are clear, that as the Brazen Serpent, the Sign of Salvation, was lifted up on high, and made obvious to every Eye, to convey healing Virtue to thoſe who were ſtung by the fiery Serpents; ſo our crucified Saviour is lifted up in the Goſpel for every Soul-wounded Sinner to regard. The belief of inviting Mercy opens the Springs of Godly Sorrow: a Natural Sorrow ariſes from the ſenſe of oppreſſing Evils, and is terminated upon our ſelves: a Spiritual Sorrow proceeds from the ſenſe of our Unworthineſs, and the

Divine

Divine Goodneſs, that is ſo ready and deſirous to ſave us.

2. There is a Promiſe of Grace to all that repent and believe. Our Saviour encourages us, *Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you Reſt.* Thoſe who feel Sin as an intolerable Burden, and their fainting Souls are without Support, let them devolve their Burden upon him, and truſt entirely in him, they ſhall obtain bleſſed Reſt. The timerous Sinners that tremble under the Weight of their Guilt, are encouraged; for in this condition Chriſt invites them to come to him, and promiſes Reſt. Let them aggravate their Sins to the higheſt, yet St. *Paul* challenges the Precedence as the chief of Sinners, and obtained Mercy. When the Heart is broken for Sin, and from it, not to believe the Promiſe of Mercy, is diſhonourable to our Saviour's Love, and the Value of

his Blood, as if not ſufficient to ſave poor Souls that would fain live in him. We have the ſtrongeſt Teſtimony of his Love, in dying for us when we were Enemies. Chriſt came with this Intention to ſave Sinners; and when they come to him, will he reject them? He cannot deny himſelf, he's Truth, and he has moſt expreſly declar'd, *Whoever comes to me, I will in no wiſe caſt out*: and this Promiſe is confirm'd by the *Will of his Father that ſent him.* Chriſt invites thirſty Souls to partake of the Waters of Life; and when he has inſpir'd them with ardent Deſires, and they come, will he ſend them away empty? 'Tis abſolutely impoſſible for him who is incarnate Love and Mercy, to deſpiſe and reject the Soul that looks to him, that longs and languiſhes after him, and will be ever unſatisfied without him.

In

In short, the precious Promises in the Gospel, of the Pardon of Sin, and eternal Salvation, are so proposed to us, that the Hope of returning Sinners may be cherish'd and confirm'd, and the Presumption of secure Sinners may be dash'd and controul'd. While we are in this middle State, the fear of Caution, join'd with the lively hope of Mercy, is the most congruous Temper, and becoming the Breast of a Christian. The Presumer is like a Ship without Ballast, floating so lightly in his own Folly, that every Gust of Temptation oversets him. The fearful Spirit is like a Ship over-laden; and if not lightned, will certainly sink and perish. Fearless Security exposes to all the Temptations that gratify the Carnal Appetites: desponding Fear causes a neglect of the Remedy. If there be no fear of Pu-

niſhment, or no hope of Pardon, the Conſequences are equally fatal.

3. 'Tis neceſſary in order to the bringing Men to Chriſt, to remove their carnal Prejudices. The firſt and moſt fear'd Difficulties are, That ſerious Religion will be a damp to all their Joys, a harſh and unreaſonable Reſtraint of their Liberties, a Bar againſt all the Advantages of the World: the ſickly Fancy is frighten'd at the thoughts of this. If the Way to Heaven were ſhort and fair, Men would like it; but 'tis long and deep, and they are diſcouraged, as the *Iſraelites* with the tedious and troubleſom Wilderneſs, before their arrival at the Land of Promiſe. Accordingly Carnal Men caſt a ſlanderous Shade upon Religion, as a melancholy, ſevere and joyleſs Diſcipline. Now we may rectify theſe Miſtakes by

by the Light of Scripture, of Reason, and of Experience.

(1.) The Scripture declares *that the Ways of Wisdom are Ways of Pleasantness, and all her Paths are Peace.* Prov. 3. 17. The Entrance, the Progress, and Continuance in these Ways, is joyful to the renewed Soul. Let us take a right View of the Divine Commands, the Sum of them is this, That Men would be happy here, and for ever. We are commanded *to know God and Jesus Christ, this is our Life*: to trust in him, this is our Strength: to love him and delight in him: And are not Love and Joy the most pleasant Affections? and is not God the most amiable and pleasing Object? We are commanded to fear him: and is it not most reasonable to fear the loss of his Favour, which is Heaven, and the incurring his Wrath, that is the deepest Hell? John 17. 3. Isa. 30. 15. Psal. 37.

We are commanded to obey his Laws; and our Saviour assures us, *his Yoke is easy, and his Burden is light*: 'tis an easy and easing Yoke, that frees us from the most cruel Bondage of Sin and Satan. And will not Men believe the Testimony of Eternal Truth, rather than their fond Fancies and corrupt Appetites? We are commanded to hear his Word; and is it not a Happiness to be directed in the way to everlasting Life? We are commanded *to pray continually*; Is it not a blessed Privilege that poor Dust may address their Requests to the *Lord Almighty, the Possessor of Heaven and Earth*, with an Assurance, that those Petitions are most pleasing to him, that are for his most excellent Blessings?

Besides this, nothing is forbid but sinful Pleasures that will end in eternal Torments: sinful Profits

fits, *the gaining of the World, with the loss of the Soul*: the Gain is nothing, and the Loss is infinite. Now where are the Chains and Fetters that are so hard and heavy as Carnal Men complain of? All his Commands are Precepts of Happiness.

(2.) This Testimony of Scripture, Carnal Men esteem a notorious Paradox: they can taste no Pleasures but what are steep'd in Sense. Take away the Enticings and Blandishments of the Carnal Appetites, they understand no other Pleasure: which is such a Deceit, as if a sick Person who feels no Pleasure but in the soft and easy Intermissions of his Disease, should conclude if he were entirely freed from it, he should be deprived of all Pleasure. Whereas the Pleasure of Health is far more desirable and constant. The Angels are ab-

ſolutely exempt from the Deſires of our carnal Faculties, and without carnal Fruitions, but are ever bleſſed and joyful in the direct Poſſeſſion of what is good, not in the relief from Evils either natural or accidental, as Hunger and Thirſt, or Sickneſs and Pain.

Pleaſure reſults from the ſuitableneſs between the perceptive Faculties and the Objects that affect them: if there be no harmonious Proportion, there will be no Muſick, no Delight. Now 'tis true, while Fleſh is the prevailing Ingredient in a Man, he only reliſhes the Satisfactions of the Senſes: he cannot enjoy God, he cannot delight in doing his Will, no more than a Swine can in clean Paſture, whoſe natural Property ſtrongly inclines it to wallow in the Mire. But when the Soul is clarified and purged by the great Refiner,

Refiner, how ſublime and ſatisfying a Pleaſure does it feel in the Love of God, and in his Service! As in natural feeding, when the Palat is in its due Temper, the Taſte commends our proper Food to the Appetite, and the Appetite to the Stomach; but a foul Stomach diſaffects the Appetite, vitiates the Pallate, and the moſt ſavoury and wholſom Meat is loathſom when the Diſeaſe is the Taſter: Thus if the Soul be in its due Temper, the doing the Will of God would be *our Meat and Drink*, mixt with a ſweeter Pleaſure than thoſe natural Operations are: but the Soul is ſo corrupt and carnaliz'd, that it has no Taſte of the pure Delights of bleſſed Spirits in Communion with God: like the *Iſraelites* who deſpis'd the Bread of Angels, and impatiently longed for the Onions and Garlick and Fleſh-pots of *Egypt*. Till

Men

Men die to Sin, the Supper of the Lamb will be insipid and nauseous.

The Carnal Mind as grosly mistakes about Liberty. 'Tis horrible Folly to think true Freedom consists in doing whatever the vicious Affections require, in conversing with such Persons as foment and gratify them. Is that Person free that is fetter'd with as many Chains of Hell, as he has predominant Lusts? Was the possest Person free who lived among the Tombs, among contagious Carcases? Then a Sinner, that without the fear of Hell obeys his depraved Appetites, and associates with those who are corrupt, and Corrupters by their wicked Example, is free. But 'tis evident that the Mind, the superiour leading Faculty, is in Bondage while the Passions reign, and the sensual Worldly Wretch with his

his imaginary Liberty, is the most accursed Slave. *Till the Son makes us free from the tyrannous Power of Sin, we are not free indeed.* Till Reason enlighten'd by the Word, resumes its Right and Jurisdiction, and leads the Will to choose what is best for a spiritual immortal Creature, and the other Faculties to obey, we are the Slaves of Satan. *When we are made free from Sin, and become the Servants of Righteousness,* and yield an ingenuous delightful Subjection to God's Laws, we enjoy a State of Liberty. Nay, the Service of God is our Glory. *He that loved us, and wash'd us from our Sins in his Blood, has made us Kings and Priests to God.* The most eminent Acts of Royal Authority are to govern the Subjects by equal Laws, and to subdue the Enemies of the Peace and Prosperity of the Kingdom: and when Divine Grace reigns

Rom. 6.

reigns in the Heart, it regulates all the Thoughts and Affections, the inward and outward Faculties, according to the holy, juſt and good Law of God, and ſubdues theſe rebellious Luſts that diſturb the Order and Tranquillity of the Soul.

(3.) Experience proves that a State of Religion is moſt delightful. Whenever the captive Soul is reſcued from the Bondage of his Luſts, and prefer'd to the Service of God, how ſweet is the Change? and how bitterly will he complain, *other Lords have had Dominion over me*, but thy Service is the trueſt Freedom? Did ever any of the Saints complain that God is an auſtere Maſter, that his Service is a melancholy joyleſs Condition? No, in their Eſteem and Affections, his Law is the moſt pure, precious, ſweet and profitable Good. Pſal. 19. *His Commands are not grievous:* they obey

obey them from Choice and Complacence. They love the Lawgiver, and like the Laws. Communion with God in his holy Ordinances, is a Heaven upon Earth to them. *One day in thy Courts is better than a thousand* in the Vanities and Business of the World. *In the Presence of God is Fulness of Joy*; and the more we are admitted into his Presence here, the more we are admitted into his Joy: all the blessed Means of our drawing near to God, and his drawing near to us, are the Gate of Heaven, and Entrance into Glory. *David*, who was so acquainted with God, declares, *There be many that say, Who will shew us any Good? Lord, lift thou up the Light of thy Countenance upon me. Thou hast put more Joy into my Heart, than when their Corn and Wine increased.* A Joy more solid and satisfying, than carnal Men receive in the Springtide of their Fruitions. As one Spark

Psal. 84.

Spark of God's Wrath firing the Conſcience, is more terrible than the moſt fearful Evils in the World: ſo one Beam of his Favour enlightning the Soul, is more ſweet and raviſhing, than all the moſt valued and deſir'd things in the World.

SER-

SERMON X.

LUKE xiv. 23.

The Lord said to the Servant, Compel them to come in, that my House may be full.

III. I Shall now prove 'tis the great Duty of the Ministers of Christ to apply themselves with a holy Zeal to bring Men to partake of the saving Mercies of the Gospel.

This will appear by considering,

1. The Command of God, from whom they are sent, lays the highest Obligation upon them to perform their Duty. The manner and degrees of Obedience, are measured by the greatness of the Authority that enjoins it. To Soveraign Authority,

thority, immediate, abſolute, and ſupream Obedience is due. The Authority of God is more binding than the higheſt in Princes, or the deareſt in Parents: What are all Kings of the Earth to him? leſs than nothing. Temporal Greatneſs conſiſts only in Compariſon. In the Scale of Magiſtracy, the Superiors to ſome are ſubordinate to others: But the Majeſty of God is abſolutely and truly Infinite. And as the immediate Servants of the King are under ſpecial Obligations to obey his Commands, beſides the common Duty of his other Subjects; ſo the Miniſters of the Goſpel by their Conſecration and immediate Relation to God, are bound with all zealous Diligence to do his Will.

2. 'Tis the principal End of their Commiſſion. God deſigns in the Contrivance and Revelation of

of the Gospel, to glorify his Mercy, and his Son in our Salvation.

First, Love is the cleareſt and moſt adequate Notion of the Deity; *God* is *Love*. Now Mercy is medicinal, healing, and recovering Love. The Object of it is the Miſerable and Unworthy. In God's Moral Government, Mercy and Juſtice are the leading Attributes, and Mercy in its Exerciſe has the Supremacy: *Mercy rejoices againſt Judgment*. When our firſt Parents were cited to Judgment for their rebellious Sin, Mercy promis'd a Saviour before the Sentence was pronounc'd. God is ſtiled the *Father of Mercies*; 'tis his natural Off-ſpring, the freeſt and moſt delightful Emanation from him. Judgment is his *ſtrange Work*, that by Conſtraint he executes. *He does not afflict willingly the Children of Men*: God is more pleaſed to ſee the Fruits of his Mercy in his Creatures

restor'd to Happiness, than the Effects of his Justice in the Guilty and Miserable. To be inclin'd to do Evil and Hurt, is an Imperfection infinitely distant and opposite to the Divine Nature. *The Lord God is a Sun*: and as 'tis proper to it to enlighten, revive and refresh the World by its Operations and Influences; 'tis accidental to consume and destroy, and proceeds from the Imperfection of Things upon whom his Beams fall. Thus 'tis according to the Nature of God to dispense the liberal Effusions of his Goodness to the Creatures; if they feel the Effects of his Justice, 'tis for Sin that deserves it, and draws it forth into Exercise. Mercy is God's Glory: by Glory we understand the Lustre that results from the Perfection of Things, and is attractive and worthy of Admiration. There is Light in one Beam of the Sun; but Glory results

sults from the Union of all its Beams in their full Strength. Accordingly a double Glory belongs to God.

1*st*. His Essential Glory, that results from his transcendent Excellencies; the supream Beauty and Brightness of that *unapproachable Light* wherein he is said *to dwell*: every Attribute being truly infinite, is most glorious.

2*dly*. Declarative Glory, that consists in the Operation and Influence of God's Perfections, and in the humble and thankful Adoration of them by intelligent Creatures. Some Divine Attributes are more eminently the Glory of God: as they are more declarative of his Perfections, and more sensibly and powerfully affect the Minds and Hearts of Men. In this respect Mercy, as 'tis the most benign and comfortable, so 'tis the brightest Light in all the Constellation of

the Divine Attributes; 'tis our Happineſs we are under it Aſpects and Influences. The other eſſential Excellencies of God are regarded as the Qualities of our Soveraign infinitely above us, with moſt humble Fear and reſpectful Admiration: But his Mercy repreſents him as our Father and Friend, and engages our Affections entirely to him. When *Moſes* deſir'd to *ſee God's Glory*, he told him, *his Goodneſs ſhould paſs before him.* Now Mercy is the moſt excellent Degree of Goodneſs. 'Tis Goodneſs primarily excited and active from it ſelf, and takes occaſion from the Miſery of the Creature to be beneficent. 'Tis obſervable, when he was proclaimed in his glorious Titles, *The Lord, the Lord God, Merciful and Gracious*; next to the Deity, Mercy is plac'd as his deareſt Attribute: and of the thirteen Titles of Honour attributed to him, nine belong to Mercy, to

ſignify

ſignify the advantage it has above Juſtice. Mercy is his peculiar Treaſure: 'tis ſaid *he is rich in Mercy*, not in Poſſeſſions, *tho the Earth is the Lord's, and the fulneſs thereof*: his Riches are not without himſelf, but in his own Perfections. Now 'tis the great Deſign of God to glorify this Attribute in the Salvation of the Loſt and Miſerable. *Adam* had ſufficient Grace to ſtand, but was free to fall, and by the Fraud of Satan join'd with his own Folly, was ſeduc'd from his Duty, and involv'd himſelf and all his Progeny in utter Ruin. It was very becoming God that his Enemy ſhould not obtain his End, that Mankind ſhould not be the eternal Trophy of the Tempter, and ſo noble a part of the Creation be as it were aboliſh'd for ever. From hence the Mercy of God took its Riſe, and moſt apparently and eminently declar'd it ſelf, in ſending his Son the

Heir of his Love and Glory, to be the Redeemer and Ranſom of the Loſt and Miſerable.

The Goſpel is made up of Arguments and Endearments, of Commands and compaſſionate Calls, of incouraging Invitations, and the moſt conſtraining Motives, that ſinful Men would apply themſelves to our bleſſed Saviour, and not periſh for ever in their Sins. And God has appointed an Order of Men conſecrated to this Service. This is moſt excellently expreſt by the Apoſtle; *Now we are Embaſſadors for Chriſt, as tho God did beſeech you by us, we pray you in Chriſt's ſtead, be reconciled to God.* From hence the Duty of Evangelical Miniſters is clear and conſequent, that with zealous Affections and perſevering Diligence they ſhould endeavour to bring Souls to partake of the Grace of the Goſpel. An Objection may be raiſed.

2 Cor. 5.

If

If God be pleased with the Salvation of sinful Men, why are not all saved? for nothing is the Object of his Will, but is within the compass of his Power.

The Objection is specious, and may surprize at first, but duly considered, may receive a sufficient Answer.

1. 'Tis a leading Rule, that when Doctrines are clearly revealed in the Scripture, we must yield our Assent, tho we cannot resolve all the Difficulties that are raised against them. 'Tis unreasonable to deny what is evident, because we cannot unfold what is obscure. There is no Doctrine more frequently and emphatically asserted in the Divine Writings, than that the Repentance of a Sinner, and his acceptance of Pardon and Life is very pleasing to God. He assures us in the most sacred and solemn manner of this; *As I live, saith the* Ezek. 33. 11.

Lord, I have no pleasure in the Death of the Wicked, but that the Wicked turn from his way, and live: He is willing they should be saved, and they are wilful to be damned. With what tender and melting Compassions does he argue with them, *Why will ye die, O House of* Israel? as if they were upon the brink of Hell, and ready to drop into irrecoverable Misery.

2. We must distinguish between his directing Will, and his approving Will: whatever God decrees to effect, shall be infallibly accomplish'd; but many things that he approves, are left undone. His Commands are his Will, the Rule of our Duty, but not of his Purpose what he will do. The Scripture mentions *the Word of God's Power*, and *the Word of his Holiness*. The Word of his Power effects all things according to his Will: but the Word of his Holiness, his

his Laws declar'd to regulate our Lives, are often oppos'd, and without Efficacy.

3. The Wisdom of God directs all the Operations of his Attributes; that orders the Dispensations of Mercy, and the Inflictions of Justice. When the Apostle had considered the astonishing Oeconomy of Providence with respect to the Jews and Gentiles, he breaks forth, *O the Depth of the Riches both of the Wisdom and Knowledg of God! How unsearchable are his Judgments, and his Ways past finding out!* That so great a part of the World live in Darkness, and die in Darkness, and go to their Fathers where they shall never see Light, and the Day-spring from on high visits other Nations, is according to the Counsel of his Will. Rom. 11. 33.

4. God does afford assisting Grace to Sinners, which if they improved, he would not desert them. The Gospel *is the Ministration of the Spirit*,

Spirit, to illuminate, excite and perſwade Sinners not to forſake their own Mercy. *He ſtrives with them*, he woes *and waits to be gracious*, till by their obſtinate Reſiſtance they quench his holy Motions. 'Tis true, he diſpenſes Grace in different degrees, for he is the Maſter of his own Favours: but tho effectual converting Grace is not beſtowed upon all, yet there is common Grace, that has a tendency to Converſion, which if humbly and thankfully improved, ſuch is the moſt free and excellent Goodneſs of God, Men would receive further Supplies. But they are careleſs and oppoſite to his gracious Operations, therefore the Spirit is moſt righteouſly withdrawn from them. He that in Luxury has waſted his Eſtate, 'tis juſt he dies in Poverty. Beſides this, 'tis very conſiderable, that Men ſhall be condemned at the laſt Day not for mere

mere Impotence, but obstinate Opposition: they loved *Darkness rather than Light, because their Deeds are evil*: not for the want of that Grace they did not receive, but for the neglect to improve that Grace they had received, and rejecting what was offered. The *slothful Servant was condemn'd for hiding his single Talent in a Napkin, not because he had not five Talents.* John 3. 19. Mat. 25.

Secondly, 'Tis the great Design of God to glorify his Son. When he brought his First-begotten into the World, the Command was, *Let all the Angels of God worship him. God has given him a Name above every Name, that at the Name of* [*Jesus*] *every Knee should bow, of things in Heaven, and Earth, and under the Earth; and every Tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the Glory of God the Father.* Those who cross his Supreme Wisdom and Soveraign Will, shall by a constrain'd Submission Heb. 1.

acknow-

acknowledg the high Dignity of his Son.

The great Command of the Gospel is; that *Men should believe on the Name of his Son Jesus Christ: Him hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give Repentance and Remission of Sins.* The Death of Christ may be considered as an Act of Obedience to God, and of Love to Men. His Intention was to glorify God, by bringing lost Souls to him. Now 'tis promised as a Reward of his Sufferings, he *shall see of the Travail of his Soul, and be satisfied.* He is infinitely pleased with the Salvation of Souls, as the Fruit of all his Anguish and bloody Agony. The Election of a number of the lost World, that shall believe in him, and be adopted and saved by him, has a special respect to his Honour, that his Death might not be in vain: that the Son of God may be magnified

1 Joh. 3. 23. Acts 5. 31.

in

in his unſpeakable Love to them, and their ſincere Obedience to him: his relative Glory, as Head of the Body, will ſhine in them for ever.

'Tis alſo obſervable, the Decree of Election is of infallible Accompliſhment, both as to the Converſion and Perſeverance of the Elect, not only becauſe the Divine Will is unchangeable and inſuperable with reſpect to the Events determined by it, but with a peculiar regard to the Glory of Chriſt. No Principle of Oppoſition in the corrupt Heart of Man can fruſtrate the Operation of God's Spirit, either in the powerful entrance, or ſure continuance of his Grace. Our Saviour tells us, *All that the Father gives me, ſhall come to me.* And, ſpeaking of his Sheep, he ſaith, *My Father which gave them me, is greater than all: and none is able to pull them out of my Father's Hand.* The Purpoſe

John 6. 37.

John 10. 29.

of

of God, and Purchase of Christ secure their Salvation: for these our
John 17. 11. Saviour intercedes, *Holy Father, keep through thine own Name, those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.* His Mediation is never interrupted: when Christ's Prayer and God's Power are ineffectual, then may they fall away totally and for ever, whom God keeps, and Christ commends to his keeping. From hence it appears, that the Ministers of the Gospel are indispensably obliged zealously to endeavour the Salvation of Souls, which the Father has design'd for the Honour of his Mercy, and which the Son of God esteems his dearest Glory.

The APPLICATION.

1. From hence there is just cause to admire the glorious Grace of God in converting Sinners, and making

making them willing to comply with the Terms of the Gospel. Indeed 'tis strange to Amazement, that Men involv'd under the Guilt of Sins so numerous and so heinous, and liable every hour to the Sentence of the Law, so sure and severe, Eternal Death for their Sins, should neglect a Pardon so dearly purchas'd, and so graciously offer'd, and not with the deepest Humility, with ravishing Joy, and the highest Thankfulness receive it. Is there no Spirit, no Understanding left in them? Nay, is sensible Nature and its inviolable Inclinations so extinguish'd, that they are Enemies to themselves? But if we consider the Depravation of Mankind so inveterate and invincible, we shall turn the Current of our Wonder another way, that the obstinate Perverseness of any is subdued, and that with consenting Wills they receive Christ as their Prince and Saviour.

Saviour. Election is the Fountain of distinguishing Grace: *Many are called, but few are chosen.* Conversion, Adoption, Justification, Sanctification, Glorification, are all the Fruits of electing Mercy. By the most gracious and free Act of his own Will, he chose some out of the corrupt Generality, (and they are but a little diminutive Flock) to make them Vessels of Honour, that his Good [illegible] might be the more admirable. Those who are made a *willing People*, were by the natural and contracted Hardness of their Hearts, as averse and repugnant to the Heavenly Call as others; if after a thousand Repulses, the Spirit had been withdrawn, they had died in their Sins: but as 'tis said of *Lot*'s miraculous Rescue from the Flames of *Sodom*, *While he lingred, the Angels laid hold upon his Hand, the Lord being merciful to him, and brought him forth, and set him without*

Ephes. 1.
Rom. 8.
Ephes. 1.
2 Thess. 2.
Acts 13.
John 12.

without the City; so the free and omnipotent Grace over-rul'd their reluctant Hearts, and strongly and sweetly inclin'd them to God their supream and satisfying Good, and to come to Christ as the only means to restore them to the Favour and Enjoyment of God. The natural Man is no more able to believe with a saving Faith in Christ, than to obey the whole Law: *'tis the Gift of God.* He provides the Means of Salvation, and applies them; he by victorious Grace *leads Captivity captive*, and bestows that most precious Gift upon his People. How many that enjoy'd the same Gospel, and did not reject so many Invitations, nor so often grieve and vex the holy Spirit, nor so long abuse the Patience of God, were justly left in their Sins? this will set a Lustre upon special and saving Mercy. O, what a conspicuous Discovery, what a lively and thank-

ful Sense will there be of this Grace in the next World! Our Saviour tells the unbelieving Jews, *There shall be weeping and gnashing of Teeth, when ye shall see* Abraham, *and* Isaac, *and* Jacob, *in the Kingdom of God, and you your selves turn'd out.* The Comparison of the opposite States will then be more joyful and transporting to the Saints, and more manifest and tormenting to the Reprobates. They shall feel a burning Thirst after the Happiness they have lost, and be tortur'd between Desire and Despair for ever.

Luke 13. 28.

2. Let those who make light of the Invitations of Grace, consider what will be the Issue of their Obstinacy. Within a little while Conscience will awaken the Remembrance of their careless Contempt of the Divine Mercy, and that will awaken Despair. To instruct such Persons, and make them afraid, that they may fly to the Sanctuary from

from the Deſtroyer, let them conſider,

(1.) This will render them inexcuſable. Their Obduration and final Ruin will be of themſelves. God is pleaſed to appeal to the Human Underſtanding, *What could I do more for my Vineyard, that I have not done?* His Works and his Words are declaratory of his Will, how pleaſing the Repentance and Life of Sinners is to him. He has prepar'd a Saviour and Salvation, and offers them to loſt Souls. In the Year of Jubilee, Liberty was proclaim'd for all the *Iſraelites* who had been Servants; but if any one would not leave his Maſter, his Ear was bored, and he was a Servant for ever. Thus the *acceptable Year of the Lord* is proclaim'd in the Goſpel, a happy Freedom to Sinners by Jeſus Chriſt: but thoſe who are in love with their reigning Luſts, refuſe this Freedom, and are con-

demn'd to the worſt Bondage for ever. God by his Authority commands them to *repent and believe the Goſpel*: He invites them by the moſt gracious Promiſes to accept and receive them: he expreſſes the moſt tender Compaſſions towards periſhing Sinners; *Why will ye die?* He reproaches their unaccountable Folly, *How long ye ſimple ones will ye love Simplicity?* He urges them by terrible Threatnings, not to neglect his offer'd Grace. But they are deaf to his loudeſt Calls: if a Luſt whiſpers from their Earthly Affections, they are preſently moved. No Mercy will ſoften them, no Reproofs will reform them; the richeſt Means of Grace are loſt, and they prodigally periſh. Now how juſtly do they fall under the condemning Sentence of the Law, who ſlight the Mercy of the Goſpel? *God takes no Pleaſure in the Death of a Sinner, but they take Pleaſure in their Sins*:

Sins: they die in their Sins, because they will die: they are deprived of Life, *because they will not come to Christ that they may have Life.* At the Day of Judgment lost Sinners will intirely clear God, and deeply charge themselves with their deserved Ruin.

(2.) Such are irrecoverable. The Gospel is the only Dispensation of Grace; if Men obstinately reject it, their Condition is as desperate as if they were bound in Chains of Darkness to the Judgment of the great Day. Mercy alone can heal us; and if that be wounded, our Sickness is incurable. *He that believeth not the Son, shall not see Life; but the Wrath of God abides on him.* His Doom is sealed and irreversible. God now speaks in a still Voice, but hereafter he will speak in a Whirlwind to the Despisers of his Grace. 'Tis true, we cannot say a Soul is quite lost while there is John 3. 36.

a delay of Judgment: but the Scripture declares, that Sinners by their ſtubborn Refuſals of Mercy, make God inexorable to their Prayers: There is a day of Grace, and the Lapſe of it is fatal to the Neglecters. Of this there have been very fearful Examples: how many Deſpiſers of the Grace of the Redeemer in the courſe of their Lives, yet in the Agony of their laſt Departure, when their Sins with a ghaſtly Aſpect appear, and with frightful Horror they look into the bottomleſs Pit, Conſcience anticipates the Divine Judgment. Let the moſt compaſſionate Miniſters offer them the Cordials of the Goſpel, and tell them they deſpair too ſoon: the ſelf-condemning Conſcience replies, they repent too late. O that Men were early wiſe to ſecure their eternal Intereſt!

Luke 19. 42.

(3.) The neglect of Salvation, will aggravate Sin and the Judg-

ment

ment of Men. *This is the Condemnation, that Light is come into the World, and Men love Darkness rather than Light.* The higher the Disobedience, the lower the Damnation will be of Sinners. The Heathens in their Race of ignorant Rebellion are not so guilty, nor liable to so heavy a Sentence as those who disobey the Gospel. The *Israelites* had so abus'd the Mercies of God to his Dishonour, there were no such Rebels on Earth; the Prophet was fain to descend to Hell for a Comparison to equal their Wickedness: *Hear the Word of the Lord, ye Rulers of* Sodom; *Give Ear unto the Law of our God, ye People of* Gomorrah. But those who turn the Grace of God into an occasion of their sinful Security, are not to be parallell'd in Hell. The Devils rebel against the Creator, against his Authority and Laws, but Men rebel against their Soveraign and Saviour, and 'tis

John 3. 19.

Isa. 1. 10.

admirable Grace. The Son of God interpos'd as Mediator to make God reconcilable to the World:
Heb. 2. *But he did not assume the Nature of Angels, he took no hold of them, nor can they take hold of him.* The Golden Scepter was never extended to them: Justice was strict and severe; for the first Sin they were presently expell'd from the Habitation of Glory, and their Doom is irrevocable. But Men are within the Reserves of Mercy; God spares them in order to Pardon, and renews his compassionate Calls to them to forsake their Sins, and live: by his Word and wonderful Patience he invites them to Repentance, and by Repentance to his Favour, and to Happiness. Now what a violent Provocation is the Contempt of such Mercy? The Furnace of Hell is heated seven times more for the Despisers of the Gospel. How will the remembrance of their Folly

Folly rack their torn Minds? The fierceſt Furies cannot ſo torment them as their ſelf-condemning Conſciences.

3. Let the Miniſters of the Goſpel be excited to diſcharge their Commiſſion with Fidelity. I ſhall ſet down ſome Directions and Motives in order to it. The general Direction is this, *Salus Populi ſuprema Lex eſto*: The Salvation of Souls is the End of Preaching, and muſt regulate it. The Qualifications of a Miniſter to make him ſucceſsful are,

Firſt, Excellent Knowledg. An ignorant Miniſter is a plain Solæciſm, as to ſay a blind Eye, not capable to perform the Act proper to it. The Office and Authority without Abilities to exerciſe it, is in vain. The Apoſtle declares the Perfection of the Scripture, that 'tis profitable *for Doctrine, for Reproof,* 2 Tim. 3. *for Correction, for Inſtruction in Righteouſneſs;*

teousneſs; that the Man of God may be perfect, throughly furniſhed unto all good Works. He is to inſtruct the Ignorant, to remember the Careleſs, to refute the Erronious, to reſolve the Doubting, and comfort the Afflicted. Not only *Fidelity,*
Mat. 24. 45. *but Wiſdom is requiſite in the Servant whom his Lord made Ruler over his Houſe, to give them Meat in due ſeaſon.* There muſt be ſubſtantial Learning to *convince Gainſayers*, and ſpiritual Skill to underſtand the Arts of the Tempter, who will ſail with every Wind, and make uſe of the various Diſpoſitions of Men to do them Miſchief. He feeds the blazing Preſumption of indulgent Sinners: He ſpeaks Peace to them when God is their Enemy: if there be ſometimes a ſad Countenance, the ſhadow of Repentance, it is ſufficient. But he perplexes tender and fearful Spirits, by ſuggeſting they do not mourn enough, to damp their

their Endeavours, and make them heartleſs in God's Service. Now 'tis a principal Duty of an Evangelical Miniſter to unmask the Malice of Satan, and defeat his Deſign: to preach the Word in that diſtinct manner, that ſecure Sinners may be afraid of Vengeance, and that the Penitent may apply the Divine Mercy. *He that wins Souls is wiſe.* The Terrors of the Lord muſt be ſet in array againſt the rebellious obſtinate Tranſgreſſors; but the indulgent Love of our Heavenly Father, the tender Compaſſions of our ſenſible Head and Saviour, and the Conſolations of the holy Comforter, are the Portion of relenting and returning Sinners.

Prov. 11. 30.

An underſtanding Miniſter inſtructs his People in their Duty and Happineſs: he will not offer them *Stone for Bread;* intricate controverſial Matters that aſtoniſh and

cannot

cannot edify, but plain Evangelical Truths, the proper Food for the Soul.

The Manner and Language in Preaching must be answerable to the Majesty of Divine Truths. There is nothing more odious than a sacred Subject triflingly handled. The Affectation of Wit and flanting Eloquence frustrates the End of Preaching, that is, to convince Sinners of their Guilt and Misery, and by the Conviction of Conscience to make them fly to the Sanctuary, our blessed Saviour, for Protection: partly because those things that flatter the Fancy, are not proper to affect the Conscience: light trimmings of Language, gaudy Expressions, glittering Points of Wit please the Imagination; but Conscience is excited and inflam'd by representing eternal Things with powerful Plainness, and in a solemn manner: and partly because the

the Human Spirit being limited, while one Faculty is attentive, another ſuſpends its Activity and Operations; ſo that the Exerciſe of the Fancy hinders the Mind from ſerious reflecting on Divine Truths, and applying them to the Soul. Vain Ornaments in a Sermon are like a painted Complection; the more 'tis advanc'd to the Eye, the more 'tis abaſed to the Judgment.

The Diſcourſe of a Preacher ſhould directly go to the Heart: it ſhould be ſo fram'd as to prove and illuſtrate the Subject, and work on the Underſtanding and Affections. We have the Pattern of this in Scripture, where the Love and Mercy of God to his Children, and his Juſtice and Power againſt his Enemies, are repreſented in the moſt pathetical manner. I will produce an Inſtance of both: *Can a Woman forget her ſucking Child,* Iſa. 49. 15.

that

that she should not have Compassion on the Son of her Womb? yea, they may forget, yet I will not forget thee. What can be more supporting and comforting? The other Instance is as terrible. *God is angry with the Wicked every day. If he turn not, he will whet his Sword; he hath bent his Bow and made it ready. He hath also prepared the Instruments of Death.* This Description of God's righteous Displeasure is more powerful to shoot through the Conscience of hardned Sinners, than the bare threatnings that Justice will surely punish them.

Psal. 7. 11, 12, 13.

Secondly, A Minister should be zealous and diligent in the discharge of his Office. St. *Paul* adjures *Timothy* in the most solemn and fearful manner, *I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judg the Quick and the Dead at his appearing, and his Kingdom: Preach the Word, be instant in season, and out of season; reprove,*

2 Tim. 4. 1, 2.

reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-ſuffering and Doctrine. Did the Apoſtle ſtir up the Fire in ſo vigilant a Miniſter, how much more needful is it to blow up the Embers in our drowſy Spirits? Certainly if Conſcience be not ſear'd and dead, ſo ſharp a Charge will rouze it to the performance of our Duty.

Zeal for the Glory of our Saviour, if it inflames our Hearts, will fire our Lips, and animate our Sermons. Let Knowledg be the Breath to blow the ſacred Fire, and the moſt burning Zeal is not exceſſive. But our Affections at the higheſt are very defective: How many preach the Word ſo coldly, as if they had no deſire to ſave Souls from eternal Death?

How many Miniſters lie down in their Lazineſs, and wretchedly neglect their Duty, to better themſelves and benefit others in preach-

ing

ing the Gospel? Idleness enervates and unstrings the Bent of the Spirit: the Mind is benumm'd by a useless and ignoble Dulness.

Some who are deputed Shepherds, may think it a Disparagement to their Greatness, to be frequently in so mean a Work as Preaching: whereas the Son of God was a Preacher of the Gospel. Others make a Gain of the Flock, but put off the Instructing and Care of it to others. They will serve Christ by Proxy, who died for us in his own Person. How can they commit to others the Charge immediately entrusted to themselves? What Exemption can they plead, what Account can they give to the great Shepherd?

Thirdly, Let Ministers, that they may be successful, adorn the holy, and without Holiness dangerous Office of the Evangelical Ministry, by a suitable Conversation.

Innocence

Innocence, and Abſtinence from foul Sins, is not ſufficient to recommend them; but *the Power of Godlineſs, and the Beauty of Holineſs* muſt ſhine in their Lives. They can never effectually teach others what they do not practiſe themſelves: if any Sin reigns in them, their Prayers cannot aſcend with Acceptance to God, and deſcend with a Bleſſing on the People. Let a Miniſter preach Divine Doctrine, yet if his Converſation be Earthly and Senſual, he is more likely to harden Sinners than to convert them. How unbecoming and diſgraceful are unholy Miniſters to their Profeſſion? What a Scandal do they give to the Profane, and occaſion to blaſpheme their high and holy Calling? Let ſuch prepare themſelves for *many Stripes*: they cannot eſcape a double Damnation, for the Neglect of their own Souls and the Souls of others committed to

them: Though a Heavenly Light shines in their Sermons, if in their Practice they are *dark Clouds, the Blackness of Darkness is reserved for them for ever.*

Fourthly, Union among Ministers is a happy Advantage to recommend their Doctrine to the People. Division and Jealousy will lessen the Authority and Efficacy of their Preaching. If one Dog opens, the Deer is not alarm'd, but the full Cry rouses him. When Ministers with one Consent declare the Wrath of God from Heaven against Sin, the Profane and Secure are afraid: and the awful Fear of Justice makes them seek for Mercy. 'Tis true, there cannot be expected an entire Conformity in Opinions among the wisest and best Men: therefore in Doctrines not so clear nor of that moment as the great Truths, a mutual Forbearance is our Duty. But to coin Contro-

Controverſies about clear and neceſſary Truths, and obſcure them by Oppoſition, is a great hinderance to the Succeſs of the Goſpel. Some worthy Men earneſtly deny the Goſpel to be a Law: Will they reform the Scripture? Is not the Goſpel called the Law of *Faith*, the *Law of Liberty*, the *Law of the Spirit of Life*? 'Tis true, the Goſpel is a Covenant of Grace, but it has all the Eſſentials of a Law: 'tis the revealed Will of the Soveraign Law-giver, commanding Sinners to repent and believe, upon no leſs Reward and Penalty, than Eternal Life to penitent Believers, and Eternal Death to thoſe who diſobey the Goſpel. Now the Command and Sanction are the proper Characters of a Law. If we duly conſider it, the Soveraignty of God is ſuch, that whatever Covenant he offers to the reaſonable Creature, has the Force and Obligation of a

Law. I instance in this one Point, that of late has occasion'd an unhappy Difference. O the blessed State above, where Ignorance and Strife are aboliſh'd for ever!

Fifthly, Frequent and earneſt Prayer to God is a powerful Means to render our Miniſtry ſucceſsful. Paul *plants, and* Apollos *waters, but God gives the Increaſe.* Let a Miniſter be compleatly furniſh'd with Learning, Judgment, Eloquence, yet all his Labour will be fruitleſs without Divine Grace. A Key that is exactly fit to all the Wards of a Lock, cannot open it without a Hand to turn it. Let the moſt proper and powerful Motives to work upon the reaſonable Nature be repreſented, yet they cannot open the Heart, unleſs they are manag'd by the holy Spirit.

'Tis very obſervable, that in the Narrative of the Miracles by the Prophets, ſome Circumſtances are related,

related, that declare they were done by the Divine Power. Sometime the Command of God was before the Performance: thus in all the astonishing Works done by *Moses*, the Command of God was the beginning. *Take thy Rod, stretch out thy Hand*, and others Orders that demonstrate the miraculous Actions not to proceed from an inherent Virtue in his Person, but from a superiour and borrowed Power. Sometimes Prayer was addrest to God before the Miracles were done: Thus *Joshua* first *speaks to the Lord*, before he *commands the Sun to stand still upon* Gibeon, *and the Moon in the Valley of* Ajalon. Thus *Elias* and *Elisha* revived the Dead by Prayer to the Lord of Life. This was declaratory, that the Prophets were but Instruments, and that God was the absolute Author of them. Accordingly in the Conversion of Souls, which is a Work as miraculous as any of

Exod. 7. 16, 19. & 8. 5. & 16. 9.

Josh. 10. 12.

1 Kings 17. 20, 21. 2 Kings 4. 33, 34.

those illustrious Miracles, there must be the Divine Appointment of the Means, and ardent Prayer to God for his Blessing. 'Tis the great Encouragement of Ministers in their Service, that whatsoever is God's Ordinance shall effect that for which it is ordain'd: the Rod of *Moses* was powerful to subdue *Egypt*, to drown *Pharaoh* and his Host in the Red Sea. Three hundred Souldiers with *Gideon*, only arm'd with Lamps and Pitchers, destroyed the numberless Army of the *Midianites*. Astonishing Victory! *And the Gospel is the Power of God to Salvation.* But Prayer is requisite to obtain the holy Spirit, by whose Influence the Word is effectual to recover lost Souls to Heaven. And 'tis evident, that numerous and entire Conversions of Sinners have been by the Ministry of holy Men, who made it their great and earnest Request that they might be successful in bring-

bringing Souls to Christ. Cold Formalities are unacceptable to God, and without Efficacy; but Prayer actuated with Life and holy Heat of Affection, ascends to Heaven and prevails. And what is more worthy of our constant and most ardent Desires, than the Salvation of precious and immortal Souls?

II. To excite Ministers to a faithful Discharge of their Duty, let them consider,

1. The Example of our blessed Saviour. It was one principal Part of his Office to preach the Gospel: this he undertook in wonderful Mercy, and perform'd with amazing Diligence. He rises before Day, and retires himself into a solitary Place to pray, that he may lose no time in Preaching. He preach'd on the *Mountain*, *in the Desert*, *in the Ship*, *in the Synagogues*, *in the High-way*, *in the*

House: no Place, no Persons, no Time was unseasonable. It was *his Meat and Drink to do the Will of his Father.* Thus constant and delighted was the Son of God (who laid aside his Majesty and Glory, that he might instruct the People without terrifying them) in his blessed Work. How does his Example reprove and upbraid our Negligence? How should it inflame us to imitate and honour him?

Mark 8. 35. Mat. 5. 1. Mark 6. 36. Mat. 13. Luke 10. 39. John 4. 34.

2. His Love to us should make us ardent and active to save Souls, as a Testimony of our Love to him. Thus he speaks to *Peter*, *Lovest thou me? Feed my Lambs.* 'Tis his Delight and Glory to be the Saviour of Sinners. How dearly has he bought our Love? How willingly did he redeem us when we were Enemies? His Love condescended to our low State, to become a Servant, that he might exalt

exalt us to his State, to be the Sons of God. How does he out-love us? We do not love his Glory as he loved our Meanneſs, not him the bleſſed God, as he did us curſed Creatures. O the Miracle of his ardent Love to us! O the Strangeneſs of our cold Affection to him!

Love cannot be idle, but will add Fire and Vigor, and cauſe unfainting Perſeverance in our Lord's Service. Love and Duty will overcome all Difficulties. If we conſider by how many Titles he deſerves our Service, and feel the dear Obligations he has laid upon us, we ſhall compel *them to come in*, that our glorious King's *Houſe may be full.*

I ſhall only add, that to ſave Souls, the Work is glorious, and the Reward is more glorious. In the Aſſembly of immortal Spirits above, all united in Perfection and Felicity,

Thoſe

Those who turn many to Righteousness, shall shine with a brighter Glory, like the Stars for ever and ever. Who would be so unhappy as to prefer sluggish Ease before a brighter Crown in Heaven?

Lastly; I will finish this Discourse with an earnest Perswasive, that Men would comply with the Invitations of the Divine Mercy. Who can without some sparks of Pity and Indignation seriously observe that Men are slight and foolish in things of eternal Interest, beyond all the degrees of Folly in the Concerns of this World? Who would that is in danger to lose his Life or Estate, and has but one day to secure them, waste it in frivolous Matters, when the Opportunity is so short, and the Omission is irreparable? Yet altho the present Life be certainly short, and uncertainly continued, and Eternity depends upon our present

present securing the Favour of God, and our Title in his Kingdom, Men employ their Time to *gain the World*, and neglect their Salvation, in comparison whereof all the Affairs of Time are a busy Folly, and vain Impertinence. Stupendious Security! Now to perswade Men to come to Christ for Life, let them consider,

1. 'Tis God's Call, to which present Obedience is due. Carnal Sense is apt to object, Is it not a Man I see and hear? 'Tis true, but the Message is the King's, not the Embassador's that brings it. A spiritual Eye looks beyond the Object of Carnal Sight, and sees Christ in the Minister by the Light of Faith. Were this believed, how would it fasten our Minds and Senses in the most serious Attention to the preaching of the Gospel!

2. Make judicious Comparisons between this World and the next.

As

As in the Light of the Sun there is an Influence that cheriſhes the vital Heat, and a Power that extinguiſhes the Kitchin Fire; ſo the Light of God's Word has a double Efficacy, it kindles Heavenly, and quenches Earthly Affections. Indeed there wants neither Glory nor Joy, nothing of compleat Happineſs in the World to come, to raiſe our Affections and faſten them upon it: and in this World all is Vanity and Vexation to alienate our Affections from it. What infinite Diſtance and Diſproportion is there between the Objects of our Choice? Who would think it poſſible, but that 'tis viſible every day, that they who have Mortal Souls ſhould be careleſs of Eternal Things, and ſpend all their Pains and Paſſions about Things that expire with the Flux of Time? That they ſhould neglect ſolid Happineſs, and purſue ſhining Bubbles?

But

But the preſent World faſcinates their Underſtandings, inſpires their Fancy with Dreams of Happineſs here: Senſuality charms them into Stupidity: they are unwilling to be diſenchanted; they enjoy their Error, and are entertain'd with pleaſant Deluſions, till awaken'd by eternal Flames.

Let the enlighten'd Mind conſider and judg, the Soul is of a Divine Original, a Spiritual Subſtance of an everlaſting Duration, and can never be happy but in the Enjoyment of thoſe Objects that are Divine and Spiritual, commenſurate to its Capacity and Duration. Let a Man poſſeſs the World with all its Advantages and Delights, the ſtarved Soul would ſuffer infinite Want, and can only be ſatisfied with the Fulneſs of God.

Under what Notion ſoever Happineſs is conceived, 'tis only to be found

found in God. What can inrich a Spirit but Spiritual Treasures? Holiness is the richest Jewel in the Celestial Crown. What can dignify and ennoble a Spirit, but an Alliance to God as a Father, and the Likeness of him in his Divinest Excellencies? What can satisfy an Immortal Spirit, and replenish it with Joy, but vital Union with God, and the immediate Influence of Almighty and Eternal Goodness? Carnal Men when they obtain their immediate End, Riches, Honours and Pleasures, they fail in their main End, true Happiness: they seem wise for the present, and are Fools for ever.

The Scripture tells us, *the Less is blessed of the Greater.* How can the present World that is so inferiour to Man in the Nobility of his Nature, afford Perfection and Satisfaction to him? How unsutable, how

how insufficient is it to fill the largest and strongest Desires of the Soul?

The World may cloy, but cannot satisfy us; but the Favour of God, the more 'tis enjoyed, the more 'tis desir'd, and delighted in. Carnal Joy seems, but is not: Fear and Stings of Remorse may be disguised and glos's'd over with a chearful Countenance and Carriage, but are not extinguish'd. Spiritual Joy seems not, but is: the Apostle tells us, *As sorrowful, but alway rejoycing*: there may be a Winter in the Face, and a flourishing Spring in the Heart. There is a secret Sweetness in the Practice of Religion, that the Unrenewed are Strangers to: they cannot see a Taste. 1 Cor. 6. 10.

Carnal Joy cannot repel its Contrary; it cannot endure the Assaults of the slight and transient Evils, to which we are expos'd here. Sick-

ness,

ness, Disappointments, Apprehensions of Evils that hover over us, may imbitter the most pleasant Condition. A wounded Spirit, like an ulcerous Palat that is fretted and pain'd with the sweetest things, turns all the Pleasures of the World into Vexation. Fear struck *Belshazzar* at his Feast into a trembling. *But Peace with God, and the Joy that flows from it, the World can neither give nor take away*: 'tis as unable to destroy it as to produce it.

Rom. 5. 2, 3. *Believers rejoice in Tribulations.*

All Carnal Joys are of short Continuance. *The World passes away, and the Lusts thereof.* Life is dying, and the Comforts of it. *All Flesh is Grass, and the Glory as the Flower of the Grass*; that by Heat or Cold, by a Blast or a Worm is soon destroyed. All the Objects of the sensual Passions are very fading. The finest Stamp of Beauty

1 Joh. 2. 17.

in

in the Countenance, how easily is it defac'd by Sickness or Sorrow, by many Accidents or Age? Riches take the Wings of the Morning, and flee away from the Possessors: Honour is casual and uncertain: the Scepter of *David*, so great a King, the Royal Branch of his Family, degenerated into a poor Carpenter.

The greatest in the World, and the most proud of their Greatness, the Luxurious Voluptuaries, shall their Pomp and Delights continue with them in the Grave? Can they reign and revel when their Bodies are in the Dust, and their Souls in Hell? Where is their admir'd Happiness? Is it not all dead with them? nothing will then remain but the tormenting Remembrance of their Folly. *But the Word of the Lord endures for ever*: 'Tis an immortal Seed, and makes the Ground 'tis planted in, to live for ever. We 1 Pet. 1. 25.

are assur'd, *he that does the Will of God, abides for ever.* The Blessedness of Heaven is everlasting, as God the Object of it, and the Soul that enjoys it. There is nothing defective in the State above, where Happiness is surrounded with Eternity. This is worthy of our most aspiring Ambition, of all our Hopes and Desires. Now is it possible that the present World, as empty as the Froth of the Sea, as vanishing as a Puff of Air, should be chosen before Celestial Happiness? It is by the most, so prodigiously are Carnal Men sway'd by Sense, that like Brute Beasts they are violently drawn by present Things, and little moved by Things spiritual and future. The Devil brings ready Money in his Hands, and tempts them with *this present World*: The Son of God offers in his Word Eternal Happiness, which is despised in the Comparison. If one should

choose

chooſe a ſmall Sum at preſent before the ſure Reverſion of an Eſtate that would enrich him all his Life, would he not be deſpiſed by all for want of Underſtanding? Yet Men allow that Folly in their own Practice, that they would condemn in others. But ſuch is the Mercy of God, that to perſwade and prevail with us, he uſes all the Arguments that can work upon the Minds of Men. Hope and Fear are the ſtrongeſt Springs to move us; he therefore ſets before us Heaven and Hell, to attract our Hope, and excite our Fear. He makes uſe of Hell to kindle our Zeal in ſeeking the Kingdom of Heaven. The moſt violent Paſſions are over-ruled by Fear. Now in the threatning of Hell all the Motives of Fear are united. Little Evils are deſpiſed, not feared: great Evils that may be eaſily avoided, or apprehended very remote, are

not fear'd. But Evils that are imminent and deſtructive, are the moſt powerful Objects of Fear. Now every Man in his ſinful State, hangs by ſlender Strings over the bottomleſs Pit: and for his under-prizing and neglect of Heaven, falls under the Sentence that determines his State in an everlaſting Hell. There is no dawning in that Darkneſs of Sorrow, no refreſhing in thoſe Flames. There is a reſtleſs Remembrance of what is loſt, as a Light that comes through a Cranny in a Dungeon, that the forlorn Caitiff may remember the pleaſant reviving Light of which he is deprived. A thouſand Years of Torment cannot expiate the Offences of thoſe who diſobey the Goſpel: they are full of Miſery, and fuller of Guilt, that remains in its Weight upon them for ever.

The

The fear of this, if duly believed and considered, will bridle the strongest Desires after this vain World, and make Men wise, that they may not perish in their Choice.

To conclude; Let those who are invited to this Heavenly Feast, come with *the Wedding-Garment*: 'tis an Allusion to the decent Custom of wearing rich Apparel for Ornament and Lustre at Marriage-Solemnities, to express Joy, and to honour the Persons that are married. Accordingly all that are in the Visible Church, should adorn the Gospel by a Conversation becoming the Dignity and Purity of their high and holy Calling. Unfeigned Faith that unites us to Christ, and is effectual and evident in all good Works, is the *Wedding-Garment*. The Apostle exhorts the *Romans to walk honestly, as in the Day, not in Rioting*

and Drunkenneſs, not in Chambering and Wantonneſs, not in Strife and Envy; and whereas it might ſeem congruous to have added, in direct Contrariety to thoſe foul Sins, Put on Temperance, Chaſtity, Patience and Charity, he directs them to put on the *Lord Jeſus Chriſt*: becauſe he is the only Fountain of ſupernatural Grace, by which our Luſts are mortified. Faith
Iſa. 61. 10. *covers us with the Robe of his Righteouſneſs, and clothes us with the Garment of Salvation.* A counterfeit Livery of Profeſſion will not make us accepted of God. Is there any real Chriſtianity without Faith in Chriſt? and is there a lively Faith without Obedience to him? Can you be a Subject without Subjection? Chriſt is the King of Saints; they are the Citizens of his Kingdom, and only enjoy the Privileges of it. How many are Chriſtians in Title, and Infidels in Practice?

Practice? They live in the bold Contempt of the Divine Law, as if they were afraid the Juſtice of God ſhould not have cauſe enough to condemn them, or they would put it to a venture, whether he would be true to his Threatning, and puniſh according to his Law? Others, tho of a fair Converſation, are but half-Chriſtians: they do not ſincerely and entirely comply with the Terms of the Goſpel, to receive Chriſt for their *Prince and Saviour*. Let ſuch remember, *the King came in to ſee the Gueſts, and ſaw a Man without a Wedding-Garment*: this ſignifies God's judicial Obſervation of all that are in his Church, not one can eſcape his all-diſcerning Eye, the cloſeſt Hypocrite is tranſparent in his Sight. It follows in the Parable, *He ſaith unto him, Friend, How cameſt thou in hither without a Wedding-Garment?* Nothing will be available in Judg-

Mat. 22. 11, 12.

ment,

ment, not the most specious and glittering Profession, without Faith in Christ, and a renewed Heart and Life: yet many fondly dream they may be saved, tho not sanctified. *He was speechless*, reduced to a defenceless Silence and Confusion. The Heart of Man is deceitful above all things, and above all things deceitful to it self: How often in the trial of his Spiritual State, by Excuses and false Glosses he deceives and satisfies himself. But there are no Apologies before the King: all things are entirely open to his Eyes: the Thoughts of Men will be their Accusers, and their Works will depose against them. And how fearful is the Judgment that follows! *Then said the King to the Servants, Bind him Hand and Foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer Darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of Teeth. Bind him Hand and Foot*: the Expression

signifies

signifies that the revenging Power of God is inevitable and irresistible. *Cast him into outer Darkness*, that signifies the Separation from the reviving Presence and Communion of God: *there is weeping and gnashing of Teeth*; the Expression signifies the deepest Sorrow and highest Fury in the Damned. What a Discord and Tumult of the tormenting Passions is *there*? What Misery, when the quickest Sense to feel, and the greatest Evils to be felt, are *there*? Hell is an intolerable Climate, where cold Despair and hot Rage are in Extremity for ever.

FINIS.

ERRATA.

ERRATA.

PAge 208. line 10. for. *toſt*, read *loſt*. P. 209. l. 10. f. *brighteſt*, r. *higheſt*. P. 225. l. 15. f. *reſt on*, r. *reſtore*. P. 232. l. 18. f. *Reveſation*, r. *Elevation*. P. 248. l. 7. dele *Can*. l. 20. f. *of*, r. *to*. P. 251. l. 23. f. *furiouſly*, r. *furious*. P. 259. l. 8. f. *make a ſhew*, r. *feel the Reſtraints*. l. 24. f. *our*, r. *their*. P. 274. l. 20. f. *take*, r. *taſte*. P. 350. l. *ult*. f. *Sin and the Judgment*, r. *the Sin*. P. 351. l. *ult*. f. *'tis*, r. *his*. P. 360. l. 7. f. *frequently*, r. *frequent*. P. 324. l. 1. f. *it*, r. *and*. P. 336. l. 13. f. *directing*, r. *decreeing*. P. 341. l. 7. f. *is*, r. *which is*. l. 10. del. *not only*. l. 13. f. *but with*, r. *hath*. ☞ P. 372. l. 19. f. *mortal*, r. *immortal*.

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